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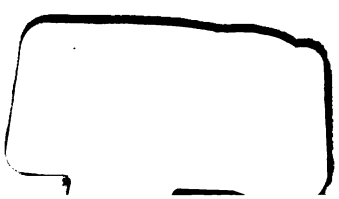

DES

Imbert de Saint-Amand

THE WOMEN

OF THE

COURT OF LOUIS XV.

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THE WOMEN

OF THE

COURT OF LOUIS XV.

Translated from the French

OF

IMBERT DE SAINT-AMAND

BOSTON
THE CLUB OF ODD VOLUMES
1892

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THE

[illegible] COURT OF [illegible]

INTRODUCTION.

[illegible] remarks that you [illegible] do you not look [illegible] I [illegible] spoke [illegible] of [illegible] work them [illegible] the plot of a [illegible] novel, and one comes to [illegible] the opinion of [illegible]: "Nothing is [illegible] as truth; truth [illegible] is worthy of admiration."

Are there, in fact, any [illegible] which attract [illegible] interest more powerfully [illegible] narration of events [illegible] have really taken place? Is there any romancer, [illegible] in plot making who could invent more [illegible] combinations or more engrossing situations than [illegible] in the dramas whose scenes are written in [illegible] pages of history? Can the most fertile fancy [illegible] of more interesting types of human [illegible] by the woman of the court of Louis [illegible] woman," as Goethe used to say, is there

THE

WOMEN OF THE COURT OF LOUIS XV.

INTRODUCTION.

"IF it is true romance that you want," once said M. de Guizot, "why do you not look for it in the pages of history?" The great writer spoke with much good sense. The historical romance is out of date; one soon wearies of reading of famous historical characters, disfigured and distorted in a vain endeavor to work them and their deeds into the plot of a modern novel, and one comes to share the opinion of Boileau: "Nothing is so beautiful as truth; truth alone is worthy of admiration."

Are there, in fact, any works of fiction which attract one's interest more powerfully than the narration of events which have really taken place? Is there any romancer, how skilful soever in plot-making, who could invent more varied combinations or more engrossing situations than are set before us in the dramas whose scenes are written in the pages of history? Can the most fertile fancy, for example, conceive of more interesting types of humanity than those afforded by the women of the court of Louis XV.? "Eternal woman," as Goethe used to say, is there

to be seen in all her glory, with all her vices and virtues, her pettiness and grandeur, her weakness and strength, her self-seeking and her self-sacrifice.

What an edifying galaxy! What all-embracing diversity of character,—from the saintly Madame Louise de France, the Carmelite, down to Madame Du Barry, the courtesan!

In the Comtesse de Mailly we have the type of the modest and retiring favorite; in the Duchesse de Châteauroux, the haughty and self-asserting mistress; in Madame de Pompadour, the clever *intrigante*, the minister in petticoats, the states-*woman;* in the good queen Marie Leczinska, the very model of devotion to duty and conjugal fidelity; in the dauphine Marie Antoinette, the resplendent image of youthful grace, of poetry and purity; in the six daughters of the king, patterns of filial respect and of all the Christian virtues. There is Madame Infante (Elisabeth), so devoted to her father; Madame Henriette, her twin sister, who died of a broken heart at twenty-four, because she could not marry where her heart was given; Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire, as inseparable in adversity as in prosperity; Madame Sophie, gentle and modest; and Madame Louise, first Amazon, then Carmelite, who, in the very ecstacy of delirium cried: "To Paradise, to Paradise! faster, faster!—to Paradise as fast as you can gallop!"

History is naught but a resurrection of the dead; but this resurrection is by no means a simple matter. To tear ourselves away from the present, in order to live in the past; to picture to ourselves the features and listen to the words of

all those who are sleeping their last sleep; to rekindle so many extinct fires, and to summon so many vanished shapes from the darkness of the past, is a task which demands the wand of a magician. History is neither interesting nor exciting except in so far as it penetrates the soul. To the end that it may present a picture in distinct tones, and with warm coloring, and not a dull, gray, lack-lustre work, men and events must be reproduced as in a mirror, wherein the whole past is reflected.

This regeneration of the women of the court of Louis XV. is made somewhat easier by the preservation of the palace in which their lives were passed. It is much to be able to say, *here* such an event took place, or such and such words were uttered; *on this spot* such an one drew his last breath. The mere sight of these noble apartments where so many dramas were enacted is of itself a fruitful source of instruction. The theatre is still in existence, and the decorations are, so to speak, unchanged. But this is not enough. We must brush the dust from the costumes; we must hunt up the actors and actresses; and the play must begin anew for us.

For this work of reconstruction there is no lack of material; it is, indeed, almost too abundant. The "Mémoires" of Duclos, Marais, Barbier, the Duc de Luynes, Maurepas, Villars, the Marquis d'Argenson, Président Hénault, Madame du Hausset, the Comte de Ségur, Weber, and Madame Campan; histories of Henri Martin, Michelet, and Jobez; volumes of the brothers De Goncourt, Sainte-Beuve, M. de Lescure, the Comtesse d'Armaillé, MM. Boutaric, Honoré

Bonhomme, Campardon, Capefigue, Le Roy, and Barthélemy; the collections of M. Feuillet de Conches and M. d'Arneth; secret correspondence of Louis XV., revealing to us his diplomatic deviousness; and that of the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau with the Empress Maria Theresa; new editions of old books; autograph letters,—what with all these and the recent publications bearing upon this epoch, one is almost overwhelmed by the very embarrassment of riches. One needs more than days,—months, yes, years are necessary to exhaust such a mass of treasures.

But life is so short, and absorption in business affairs so general, that scarcely any one has the leisure or the inclination to digest so many volumes. Is it not the province of a critic to spare his readers the trouble of making these minute investigations, to guide them through the labyrinth, to give in condensed form the substance of long narrations, and to bring out in bold relief the most important and characteristic passages; in a word, to make the study of history interesting, and easy of comprehension by the general reader, while most scrupulously adhering to the exact truth? Such is the result which we would be glad to accomplish with regard to Louis XV. and the women of his court.

This monarch, whose name is now held in such disrepute, was a type of those wavering, inconsequent, incomprehensible mortals of whom one sees so many in this world of contradictions and misery. Who, alas! of us all has not a little of the Louis XV. in his make-up? To see clearly what is right, and do what is wrong; to believe, but not

practise; to seek in vain in debauchery relief from ennui; to act against one's conscience, and condemn one's self, without amending one's ways; to be dissatisfied with one's self while lacking the strength of will to repent effectively,—is not this the common lot of mankind? How many honest citizens are merely reproductions of Louis XV. without his crown. They seem to respect their wives and love their children. They are very severe upon free-thinkers. They speak respectfully of religion, and at the same time they do not themselves abide by the moral maxims which are always on their tongues; they are false to their marriage vows, and lead lives of shameless debauchery. Their whole existence is one long inconsistency; they have no idea what they really are, nor what they really desire.

Such was Louis XV. His piety was not hypocrisy. His struggles to convert himself came to nothing, but they sprung from the depths of his uneasy conscience. He remained in darkness, but he dreamed of light. Let us not, then, judge him without pity.

Does not this harsh judgment of kings come with extremely bad grace from demagogues? Shall we look to find a higher moral sense among the red caps than among the red heels? Louis XV. was not a faithful husband, but he had sincere esteem for his wife, and very deep affection for his children. No one but M. Michelet has had the hardihood to represent him as an incestuous parent. This tendency to discover poison or incest at every turn seems to be a sort of mania with some persons. Notwithstanding the

scandalous irregularity of his life, he was not so detestable a character as he has been painted by some hands. The fit word to characterize him is not "wicked," but "weak." Take away his favorites, and he might have been not only a good man, but a great king as well. He was intellectual and well-meaning. His people adored him. Fortune heaped all her blessings upon him. Voltaire went into ecstacies over his glorious reign, which the advocate Barbier declared to be the most splendid period in the whole history of France. Who is to bear the blame of ruining and bringing to naught this fair promise? The arch enemy, debauchery.

Oh, how swift and how smooth is the descent to sin! How surely one misstep leads to another! For several years Louis XV. was a model for all husbands (1725–1733). Then he was guilty, under the rose, of his first backsliding, and thenceforward there was no check in the downward path. His infidelity was at first shame-faced,—he concealed it; but little by little he grew bolder.

His first publicly avowed connection was with the Comtesse de Mailly, who was succeeded by her sister, the Marquise de Vintimille; and thus far he maintained at least a show of decency.

Louis XV. was very sparing of the public funds, and his old preceptor, Fleury, had not lost his influence over him. But Fleury died (1743), and the king no longer had a mentor. He gladly threw off the yoke; and scandal raised her head in triumph in the person of a third sister of the same family, the Duchesse de Châteauroux.

But the monarch had many a bitter lesson to learn. Madame de Vintimille died in childbirth (1741); the king himself was very near death at Metz; the Duchesse de Châteauroux died of chagrin and excitement at the close of the year 1744. Then it was generally believed that Louis was really converted. But no; at this point begins the favor of that minister in petticoats, the Marquise de Pompadour, a veritable queen *de la main gauche.* In the words of Voltaire she was a sort of grisette, well adapted for the opera or the harem, and it was her unceasing effort to distract the ennui-ridden monarch by expedients more preposterous than the ennui itself. Death overtook her at the task, and Louis had not a tear for her memory.

It was La Rochefoucauld who said: "If one thinks that love enters into one's attachment for a mistress, one is very much at fault."

Meanwhile Louis was getting on in years. The queen died in 1768. He regretted her death, and the idea prevailed that he had at last determined to follow the sensible advice of his medical advisers, and not only to put on the drag, but to unhitch his whole team. But they reckoned without the woman who was to introduce at Versailles the slang of the market-place. After the great ladies came the fair bourgeoise, to be followed in turn by the woman of the common people; after the sisters De Nesle, Madame de Pompadour; after Madame de Pompadour, la Du Barry,— la Du Barry, the "gateway of the Revolution."

I am particularly impressed by one fact in this succes-

sion of royal mistresses; on all sides I see dissipation and debauchery, and no signs of real love. Whither has love betaken itself, with its scrupulous delicacy, its unselfishness, its eager self-sacrifice, its mysticism, and its poetry? I can nowhere discover even its shadow. Ah, how truly did La Rochefoucauld say, "It is with true love as with supernatural appearances; everybody talks about it, but very few know what it really is."

On the other hand there is a never-ending parade of cynical indulgence in vice; and when I gaze upon the unfortunate king, degraded, corrupted and overborne by it, wearied and grieved and sad even unto death, I involuntarily repeat to myself the words of one of the most eloquent of men: "When the exhilaration has once vanished, there remains in the mind a melancholy sense of amazement, an empty void bitter to the thought. One may fill it, to be sure, by fresh excesses, but it will make itself apparent again, still more vast than before; and this painful alternation from the height of enjoyment to the depths of despair, from glimpses of bliss to utter hopelessness, will at length result in chronic melancholy. One must no more say to him who is thus affected, 'See what a beautiful day;' nor 'Listen to that lovely music;' nor must one even say to him, 'I love you!' Sunshine, melody, affection, everything that is pure and sweet serve only to inflame his hidden wound. He is doomed to dream of the shades of hell, and everything is to his apprehension as in a tomb, where the pure air does not penetrate, and the cold marble freezes one

to the bone. There comes a time when the utter satiety of all his faculties convinces him beyond doubt of the nothingness of the universe. There was a time when the despairing wretch needed only a woman's smile to open before him boundless perspectives of happiness; to-day the adoration of the whole world would not move him. He would reckon it at its real value, — naught."*

Is not this deep gloom of Louis XV. in itself a moral lesson, to the full as impressive as the precepts of all the preachers in the world? In him we see a sovereign specially endowed by fortune, handsome, powerful, victorious, flattered with general admiration, seated on the first throne in the world, adored by his people almost to idolatry, with a fond and devoted wife, good and dutiful children, and soldiers who were ambitious only of the honor of giving their lives in his service, crying, "Vive le roi!" He abode in magnificent palaces; he cut loose from the chains of etiquette whenever he chose, and secluded himself, like any private gentleman, in those delightful little boxes, which were masterpieces of taste and art. Every one about him sought to anticipate his every wish, and to divine his whims; all the arts were exhausted to make life a pleasure to him; every form of dissipation, and luxury in every shape conspired to distract and entertain him. His health was robust; a famous table companion, a bold horseman, an indefatigable huntsman and lover, he indulged, as his fancy moved him, in relaxation of every variety. And yet, he was always a

* Lacordaire, "Deuxième Conférence de Toulouse."

prey to the blackest despondency, and most forbidding gloom, and to the close observer, — the contemporary memoirs bear us out in the statement, — the sentiment which he inspired was pity rather than envy.

What must we conclude from all this, if not that neither the dazzling glitter of gold, nor the magic spell of noble birth, nor clouds of incense, nor the fawning of flatterers, nor the deceptive pleasure of debauchery, nor the intoxication of power can avail to make a man happy? He is athirst on the edge of the bubbling spring; he finds thorns in the crown of roses which encircles his brow, and a gnawing reptile glides noiselessly, like Cleopatra's asp, among the fragrant flowers whose sweet perfume he inhales. The lights of the feast grow pale, the deserted boudoirs are quiet as the tomb, when suddenly, the words "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," appear written in letters of fire upon the portals of gold and marble. O king, cease to expect a truce to your misery, or new relief for your ennui, that merciless companion of your grandeur! Your own worst enemy is yourself; and all your struggles are in vain, for you are not at peace with yourself. O very Christian king, descendant of Saint Louis, you suffer, and it is meet that you should suffer; for you cannot with a conscience free from self-reproach take your seat upon the throne, or kneel before the altar.

The close of this misspent life was most melancholy. The Comte de Ségur relates that Louis, on the way to the hunting field, encountered a funeral procession, and rode up

beside the hearse. He was always inquisitive, and asked whose funeral it was; he was told that it was that of a young girl who had died of the small-pox. He was stricken with a sudden fear, returned to Versailles, and was almost immediately prostrated with the baleful disease, the mere mention of which had driven the blood from his cheeks. Gangrene infected the system of the pleasure-loving monarch. He was shunned as if he were a leper. His daughters alone, paragons of devotion and courage, faced the risk of contagion, and never left the bed of death.

Study the story with care. Where you anticipate nothing but a chronicle of scandal you will find a mine of instruction. Corrupt periods are possibly more fruitful in useful lessons than times of more decorum and austerity. It is vice, not virtue, that cries, "Vanity, vanity, all is vanity." These women are the culprits, — these royal favorites who rise from the grave, beating their breasts, to apologize to posterity for their sins. These ravishing beauties who appear for a brief moment upon the stage and vanish like ghosts; these wretched mistresses, who, like the flowers of the field, wither and fade away between morn and eve; these unhappy victims of caprice and depravity all bear witness to the truth of the words spoken by the frail woman of whom the gospel tells the story; thus history becomes morality in action.

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PART FIRST.

1715-1774.

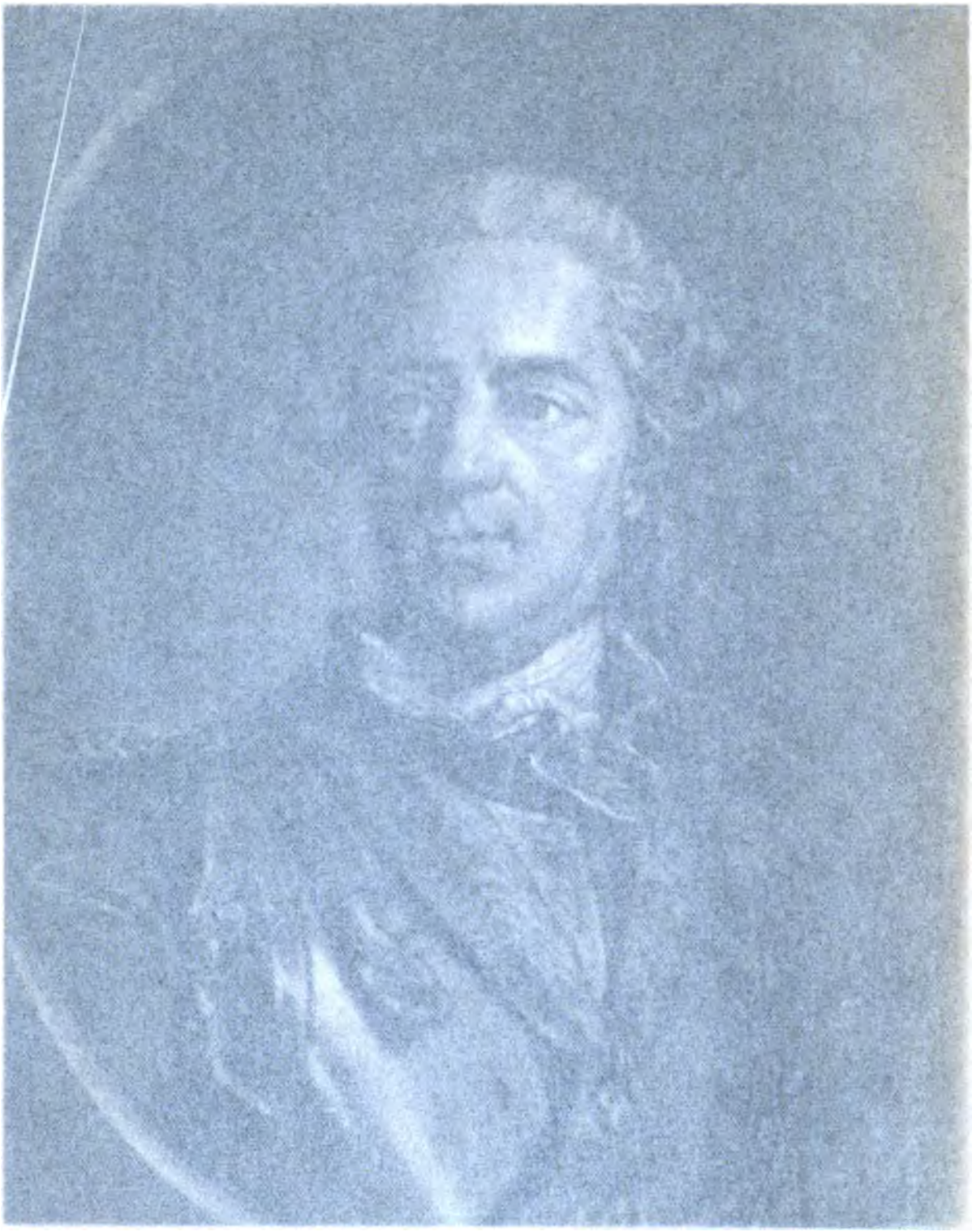
I.

THE SPANISH INFANTE. [illegible] BETROTHED TO LOUIS XV.

WHEN Louis XIV. breathed [illegible] Versailles were at the point [illegible] one dared to dwell in the sun-king's [illegible] years it was deserted. On the 9th of Sep[illegible]15, at the very moment when Louis XV., aged five and a half, was being taken to Vincennes, the body of him who had been Louis XIV. was conveyed to its last resting-place at Saint Denis. The people danced and sang and drank and put no bounds to their tumultuous joy. The following epigram was in everybody's mouth:—

Non Louis n'était pas si dur qu'il le paraît,
Et son trépas le justifie,
Puisque, ainsi l'a voulu le Maître,
Il est mort pour notre salut.

Such is the gratitude of nations! Such the sole residuum of such unbounded flattery and such clouds of incense! *Sic transit gloria mundi!*



PART FIRST.

1715–1744.

I.

THE SPANISH INFANTE, MARIE-ANNE-VICTOIRE, BETROTHED TO LOUIS XV.

WHEN Louis XIV. breathed his last it seemed as if Versailles were at the point of death as well. No one dared to dwell in the sun-king's palace, and for seven years it was deserted. On the 9th of September, 1715, at the very moment when Louis XV., aged five years and a half, was being taken to Vincennes, the body of him who had been Louis XIV. was conveyed to its last resting-place at Saint Denis. The people danced and sang and drank, and put no bounds to their tumultuous joy. The following epigram was in everybody's mouth:—

> Non, Louis n'était pas si dur qu'il le parut,
> Et son trépas le justifie,
> Puisque, aussi bien que le Messie,
> Il est mort pour notre salut.

Such is the gratitude of nations! Such the sole residuum of such unbounded flattery and such clouds of incense! *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

France, which thus outraged the memory of the old hero, grovelled in the dust at the feet of a mere child. On the 12th of September, at Paris, an enormous crowd elbowed one another around the palace of Parliament. Little Louis XV. stepped from his carriage amid deafening acclamations, and solemnly entered the palace. He removed his hat, and said gracefully as he replaced it on his head: "Gentlemen, I have come to assure you of my affection. My chancellor will make known my wishes to you." And the first president replied, "All your subjects delight to behold you upon your bed of justice, the image of God upon earth."

"Princes are very badly brought up," says the Marquis d'Argenson; "nothing pleases them, and nothing teaches them to mend their ways." Ought we not to be indulgent in forming our judgment of a prince whose governor, Maréchal de Villeroi, was continually dinning into his ears on the balcony of the Tuileries: "Do you see all those people, my master? well, they are all yours, they all belong to you." The regent used to say to the little fellow: "I am here for no purpose but to answer your questions, make suggestions, receive and execute your orders." Small wonder that the child already felt himself a man.

In the year 1721 he was betrothed to the infante, Marie-Anne-Victoire, daughter of King Philip V. of Spain. Louis was eleven years old, the infante only three!

It was a matter of great difficulty to induce the king to give the consent which was necessary. His little fiancée came to Paris the year following (March, 1722). Louis

went as far as Montrouge to meet her. Along their route back to Paris all the houses were draped with gay-colored cloth, and adorned with flowers and greenery. On the following morning the news-sheets informed the public that the king had given the queen — which was the title bestowed upon the infante — a doll worth twenty thousand francs. Three months later (June, 1722) Louis and his fiancée took up their abode at Versailles, which thus became once more the political centre of France. The king took possession of the bed-chamber of Louis XIV.* which he continued to occupy until 1738. The infante was installed in the queen's suite, and her bed-chamber was the same which had been occupied by Marie-Thérèse (wife of Louis XIV.), the Dauphine de Bavière (wife of the only son of Louis XIV.), and the Duchesse de Bourgogne (mother of Louis XV.).† Her inseparable companions were the two younger daughters of the regent, whom she treated like children less mature than herself, although they were twice as old as she. She kept them in leading strings, so as to prevent their falling, and would say, as she kissed them at parting, "Little princesses, go home now, and come and see me every day."

Louis XV. was crowned and anointed at Reims, the 25th of October, 1722. "I remember," says the Marquis d'Argenson in his "Mémoires," "how like he was that morning to the ideal god of Love, with his long robe and silver cap, which form the costume of a religious neophyte, as well

* Salle No. 124 of the "Notice du Musée de Versailles," par M. Eudore Soulié.

† Salle No. 115 of the same.

as of a candidate for the throne. I have never seen anything so affecting as his countenance then was. One's eyes became moist with feeling for the poor little fellow, who had come safely through so many dangers, the sole remnant of a family which had been exterminated root and branch, not without suspicion of foul play."

All France idolized its little king, whose beauty, of the most distinguished cast, had something of the ideal. The Emperor of Germany said that he was the child of all Europe.

When he had completed his thirteenth year, he was, in accordance with time-honored custom, declared to have attained his majority (February, 1723) and in the same year the Duc d'Orléans, who had most loyally performed his whole duty to his young pupil, took upon himself the functions of first minister, after the death of Cardinal Dubois. He showed the deepest respect for the youthful sovereign, and carried his portfolio to him every afternoon at five. The king took much delight in this work, and was always impatient for the hour to arrive.

The sudden death of the Duc d'Orléans at Versailles (2d of December, 1723) was a source of deep distress to Louis XV.

Under the name of the Duc de Bourbon, the new first minister, the real power was wielded by a woman. She was one of those ambitious creatures, devoid of moral principle, but abounding in wit and in power to charm and fascinate, —one of those sirens who, living in intrigue, end by falling

into their own snares, and bitterly expiate their short-lived triumph.

The Marquise de Prie, the omnipotent mistress of M. le Duc,* was twenty-five years of age. A daughter of the wealthy financier, Berthelot de Pléneuf, she had married a nobleman, who was appointed by her influence ambassador at Turin. She lived in great style in that city, and ran into debt there. Her father was unable to support her, for he had to flee the country to avoid prosecution by government, and the Marquis de Prie was recalled from his mission.

The young marquise was not the woman to be disheartened by such set-backs. She had only to show herself at court to bring the Duc de Bourbon to her feet, and enter upon a life of princely magnificence. "She had," says the Marquis d'Argenson, "a lovely face, a quick, shrewd wit, and she was clever, ambitious, and reckless. M. le Duc was madly in love with her. I knew all their habits, their visits to the bal de l'opéra, their little establishment on Rue Sainte-Apolline, their modest drab-colored carriage, which looked for all the world like a public vehicle on the outside, but was superbly fitted up within. It was she who named the queen, just as I would select my own valet."

In 1725, when the incessant rains had destroyed the harvest, she saw the relics of Sainte-Geneviève at the head of a procession, intended as an intercession for fine weather. "The people are fools," said she; "do they not know that it is I who send the rain, and fair weather too?"

* The universal appellation of the Duc de Bourbon.

Veiling her violent temper under a cloak of gentleness, insatiable in her greed of wealth and power, while ostensibly indifferent and disinterested; a libertine by habit rather than by inclination, always running after pleasure, with no thought of love; fearlessly deceiving her lover, who believed what she told him in contradiction to his own eyesight, Madame de Prie led the Duc de Bourbon and France by the nose. But there was one thing which made her anxious; the young king's health was always delicate. If he should chance to die suddenly, the crown would revert to the house of Orléans, and there was war to the knife between that house and the Duc de Bourbon.

In 1725 the infante, destined bride of Louis XV., was but seven years old, so that the marriage could not be consummated for several years to come. Now there was no peace for M. le Duc and his favorite so long as the king had no direct heir.

M. le Duc slept at Versailles in the apartments directly beneath that of the king. He fancied one night that he heard more than the usual amount of noise and commotion overhead. He jumped out of bed in a great hurry, and rushed upstairs in a state of great alarm, clad only in his dressing-gown. Maréchal, the first surgeon, amazed at the apparition, asked him what had frightened him so. The duke, quite beside himself, could answer only in monosyllables: "I heard a noise — the king is ill — what will become of me?" Somewhat reassured by Maréchal, he agreed to go back to bed, but he was heard to mutter to himself: "I will

not be caught this way again; if he recovers from this, he must be made to marry at once."

It was therefore determined that the infante, because she was so young, should be sent back to Spain. Her father, Philip V., was exceedingly indignant at the insult. "All the blood of Spain," said he, "would not suffice to avenge such an affront." At Madrid the mob were allowed to carry the effigy of Louis XV. through the streets, amid execrations and insults, and the Pyrenean peasants made numberless forays into the French pasture-lands and mutilated the cattle.

Two princesses of Orléans were in Spain at this time. Both had been sent to Madrid when the infante came to France.* Mademoiselle de Montpensier, born in 1709, married the Prince of Asturias, eldest son of Philip V.; the other, Mademoiselle de Beaujolais, born in 1714, was betrothed to Don Carlos, brother of the Prince of Asturias. The elder was gloomy, morose, and capricious; the younger, on the contrary, was a lovely child, pretty as well as clever. When she arrived in Spain she was seven years old, just Don Carlos's age, and Queen Elisabeth Farnèse wrote to the Duc d'Orléans: "Her little husband is perfectly wild with delight, and he is very fortunate to have such a fascinating little princess."

When Philip V. abdicated in 1724, in favor of the Prince of Asturias, who succeeded him as Louis I., Made-

* See the interesting work of M. Édouard de Barthélemy, "Les Filles du Régent," 2 vols. Chez Firmin-Didot.

moiselle de Montpensier became queen. But the new king died after reigning only eight months; Philip V. resumed the crown, and the young widow became a mere cipher at court. As soon as it became known at Madrid that Louis XV. did not propose to wed the infante, it was decided that the widow of King Louis, and Mademoiselle de Beaujolais should be forthwith shipped back to Versailles by way of reprisal. The Spaniards were entirely unmoved at the departure of the widowed queen, with whom they had never been in sympathy; but there was much regret for the loss of Mademoiselle de Beaujolais, who was a fascinating child, although but nine years old, and had become very dear to her little lover, shining as she did like a ray of light in the gloomy Escurial.

In France the unceremonious dismissal of the infante, who was commonly called queen, by anticipation, was not wholly unattended by regretful sorrow. The little seven-year-old princess had been put under the charge of the king's old governess, Madame de Ventadour, who was devoted to her. The great-granddaughter of Louis XIV.* had already learned to acknowledge the homage of the populace with a gracious inclination of the head, and her charming manners were extremely popular. But Louis XV., who was in his sixteenth year, and was already dreaming no doubt, of the pleasures toward which he was irresistibly drawn by his natural precocity, was hardly content with so young a bride. For that reason he congratulated himself

* Philip V. was the old king's grandson, and uncle of Louis XV.

upon the rupture of an alliance which must, in the nature of things, be one merely in name for so long a time, and, as Voltaire said, his feelings, when the infante was sent away, were like those of a bird escaped from its cage.

Beautiful presents were showered upon the young princess, and it was determined that her homeward journey should be attended with all the pomp and magnificence which etiquette required. She left Versailles on the 5th of April, 1725, and was exchanged at Saint-Jean-Pied-le-Port on the frontier, for the two Orléans princesses. She married in 1729 Joseph-Emmanuel, then prince, afterwards king, of Portugal, and "presented to that monarch," says Voltaire, "such children as we should have been sorry to have her bear to Louis XV.; her married life was very unhappy."

As for the two Orléans princesses, theirs was a sad lot; the queen-dowager of Spain, who died in 1742, passed her life in straitened circumstances, with an empty title, and a mere mockery of a court. The two families to which she belonged had only one thought, — how to avoid maintaining the unfortunate young woman. Spain was shamefully remiss about paying her allowance, and after having reigned over one of the proudest kingdoms in the world, she had, for economy's sake, to live for three years at the Carmelite Convent in Paris. While she still lived they treated her as if she were already dead.

Her sister, Mademoiselle de Beaujolais, lovable, gentle, and charming princess that she was, always kept a place warm in her heart for her old sweetheart, Don Carlos (after-

wards Charles III.), who was also true to his first love. Perhaps the project of marrying them might have been renewed in the future, had not the young girl died in 1734, carrying her faithful sorrow with her to the grave. She had not completed her twentieth year.

This rupture of Louis XV.'s proposed marriage was a very ill-advised proceeding. The prince was only fifteen years of age. He might well have waited a few years before marrying. Much would have thus been gained in affording time for him to complete his studies, and to mature his character. Moreover it was a shameful thing to put such an affront upon a mighty nation like Spain. It was not the Spanish people only who were insulted; the blow was aimed with equal force at the glorious memory of the great-grandfather of the infante, the great king who uttered the famous words: "There are no longer any Pyrenees." It was a sad lesson to teach the youthful sovereign, leading him thus to break his plighted word; in this way he was very early in life encouraged to yield to the evil caprices and selfish indifference to the feelings of others, of which he was to furnish disheartening proofs more than once during his reign.

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II.

II.

THE KING'S MARRIAGE TO MARIE LECZINSKA.

IN 1725, in Weissembourg, a little village of Alsace, an impoverished, proscribed king was living with his family in an old dismantled commandery. This king without a kingdom, this fugitive who ennobled his pitiable condition by his cheerful resignation in adversity, was the Pole Stanislas Leczinski, protégé of King Charles XII., of Sweden. Driven out of Poland after an ephemeral reign of a few months, Stanislas was allowed to take refuge in France, and was living at Weissembourg, in absolute seclusion, with his mother, wife, and daughter, and some few gentlemen who had remained faithful to him through all his misfortunes. His daughter Marie, born at Breslau, the 23d of June, 1703, was at this time twenty-two years old. Of a deeply religious turn, gentle and sweet, she was the idol of her exiled parents. If the subject of marriage was ever mentioned to her, she would say: "Pray do not imagine for a moment that I could ever be happy away from you; it is far, far sweeter to me to share your disgrace, than enjoy, far from you, any good fortune which did not fall equally upon you." Her education was judicious and thorough. So much

of her time as was not passed in study or prayer, she devoted to working for the poor of the village, and embroidering decorations for the church. She was a true Christian, one of those estimable young women whose charm has something of the angel, and who make virtue attractive.

One day Stanislas, in a high state of excitement, rushed into the room where his wife and daughter sat at work. "Let us fall upon our knees," he cried, "and give thanks to God!" "Dear father," said Marie, "have you been recalled to Poland?" "Ah, my dear child," was the reply, "Heaven has been even kinder to us than that. You are to be Queen of France!"

And it was not a dream.

The daughter of the proscribed king, the poor, obscure princess, who was then living on the charity of the French court, and who would have been only too glad, the day before, to marry one of those who were to be her principal servants, ascended as if by miraculous interposition the proudest of earthly thrones.

How did it come to pass that she was given preference over the ninety-nine marriageable princesses, whose names figured in the list which was prepared at Versailles? Besides her name on that list, only this brief comment appears: "Nothing is known to the discredit of this family." Louis XV., who discarded the daughter of a king of Spain, might have chosen at will among the wealthiest and most exalted princesses of Europe. How did it happen, then, that he was made to espouse this poverty-stricken Pole, who brought

him no dowry, and was seven years older than he, — the complement of the disparity in years between Louis and his first fiancée, the little infante? To be sure, Lozillières, a former secretary of legation, who was sent by the Duc de Bourbon on a confidential mission to collect information as to twenty-seven princesses, thus drew the likeness of Marie Leczinska: "This princess, who is as simple in her habits as Alcinous' daughter, who knows no cosmetics except rain and snow, and who sits between her mother and grandmother embroidering cloths for the altar, reminds one, here, in this old commandery of Weissembourg, of the ingenuousness of heroic ages." Can it be that this mythological style made an impression upon the sceptical, corrupt hearts of M. le Duc, and his mistress, Madame de Prie?

The duke and his favorite did not trouble themselves much about such points as these. Their selection of Marie Leczinska meant simply that they believed that, owing her elevation to their favor alone, she would look upon herself as their obliged servant, and would become a pliant tool in their hands. The circumstances of her condition which seemed to promise most to them were her poverty, and the price set upon her father's head; also the fact that the unhappy exile, dethroned thirteen years before, had been wandering from one place of refuge to another, — Turkey, Sweden, Deux-Ponts, and Alsace; that the young woman was simply rather attractive personally, without claim to beauty; that she was seven years older than Louis, and that by seating her upon the throne in a most unforeseen,

and almost incredible fashion, they might naturally hope to establish exceptionally strong claims upon her gratitude.

At this time Louis was the handsomest young man in the realm. His striking face beamed with expression. Whenever his charms of feature or manner were extolled to Marie Leczinska, "Alas!" she would say, "you increase my terror tenfold."

It is worth while to read, in the sympathetic work of Madame la Comtesse d'Armaillé,* the story of the early days of a union which bade fair to be a happy one. Louis caused formal demand for Marie Leczinska's hand to be made by the Cardinal de Rohan, Archbishop of Strasbourg. She replied simply: "I am overwhelmed with gratitude, Monsieur le Cardinal, for the honor bestowed upon me by the King of France. I have no will other than that of my parents, and their consent involves mine."

The marriage was solemnized at Strasbourg by proxy, on the 14th of August, 1725. The king was represented by the Duc d'Orléans. After receiving her parents' farewell blessings, and distributing souvenirs among those friends who had remained faithful in adversity, Marie set out to join her husband. On the journey she was everywhere welcomed with respectful homage, and extravagant adulation.

"There is nothing which these kind Frenchmen do not do to entertain me," she wrote to Stanislas Leczinski; "they say the most complimentary things to me; but, alas! no one tells me that you are near me. They may tell me even that

* La Reine Leczinska. 1 vol. Dentu.

soon, for I am travelling in fairy-land, and am truly under the magic domination of the fairies. Every moment I undergo some new transformation, each more wonderful than the last. Sometimes I am far lovelier than all the Graces, and again I find myself ranked with the Nine Sisters; here I am endowed with all virtues of an angel, and there the mere sight of me spreads blessings around. Yesterday I was the marvel of the world, to-day I am everybody's lucky star. Every individual does his best to deify me, and I have no doubt that to-morrow I shall find myself exalted above the immortals. To dispel the illusion I put my hand to my head, and at once I become again the little girl whom you love, and who loves you so dearly." The newly made Queen of France signed this letter with her Polish pet-name "Maruchna."

On the 3d of September, at Sézanne, the Prince de Conti, in the guise of a page, brought her a bouquet from Louis XV. The following day, near Moret, she saw her spouse for the first time. As soon as he appeared, she knelt upon a cushion at his feet; the king at once raised her and kissed her affectionately.

The royal couple made their entry at Fontainebleau on the 5th of September. Marie was crowned the next day. "The queen," Voltaire wrote to the wife of President de Bernières, "has a thoroughly good face, although it is not in the least pretty. Everybody is in raptures with her modesty and tact. The very first thing she had to do was to distribute among the princesses and maids of honor all the

superb jewels which were given her upon her marriage, and which included every description of ornaments, except diamonds. When she saw the case in which all these were displayed, she said, 'Do you know, this is the first time in all my life that I have ever been able to make presents.' She used a bit of rouge on her wedding day, — just enough to avoid being pale. She fainted for an instant in the chapel, but only for form's sake.

"There was a theatrical performance that same day. I had written a little interlude, which M. de Mortemart refused to produce. They gave, instead, 'Amphion' and the 'Médecin malgré lui,' which last seemed rather malapropos. After supper they had fireworks, with a vast amount of powder, but very little novelty or variety. In short, there is an infernal noise and tumult here, a vast crowd, and frightful confusion."

The queen's extreme affability was universally applauded. Popular admiration was aroused, not by the magnificence of her costume, nor by the *sancy* which sparkled at her waist, nor the *régent* which gleamed upon her chaste brow, but by her modest demeanor, her sweet and gentle manners, and her gracious expression, more beautiful than mere beauty of feature. Voltaire was in the front rank of those who paid their court to this new planet, which cast so soft a light. But he was not satisfied with the reward bestowed upon his flattery. He wrote from Fontainebleau to M. Thiriot on the 17th of October, 1725: "I have been very well received by the queen. She wept over 'Marianne,' and laughed at

the 'Indiscret;' she frequently speaks to me, and calls me 'her poor Voltaire.' A fool might be content with so much; but, unhappily, my reflections have gone deep enough to convince me that praise amounts to very little, and that the rôle of a poet at court is always rather ridiculous. You would not believe, my dear Thiriot, how weary I am of this life of a courtier. 'Henri IV.' is being shamefully neglected here at the court of Louis XV. I begrudge every moment that I steal from him. The poor nursling ought already to have appeared in quarto, on beautiful paper, with a fine broad margin, and handsome letter-press. It must appear this winter, no matter what may happen. I think you will find that it is rather better done than 'Marianne.' The epic poem is my stronghold unless I am very much mistaken. The queen is buried every day under a shower of Pindaric odes, sonnets, letters, and wedding-songs. I fancy that she looks upon the poets as the court buffoons; and if she does, she hits the nail on the head, for a man of letters is a great buffoon to waste his time here, where he can neither give nor receive pleasure. Adieu."

Voltaire, by dint of his complimentary effusions in prose and verse, at last obtained a pension of fifteen hundred livres, which led him to write to Madame de Bernières, on the 13th of November, 1725: "I depend upon Madame de Prie's kindness. I no longer find any cause to complain of the life of a courtier, but am beginning to entertain reasonably strong hopes."

A few days after the date of this letter (December 1)

Marie Leczinska left Fontainebleau, and took up her abode at the château of Versailles. There she occupied what was known as the queen's suite, and slept in the room which had been occupied successively by Marie-Thérèse, the Dauphine de Bavière, the Duchesse de Bourgoyne, and the infante, Marie-Anne-Victoire. There she was destined to give birth to all her ten children, and there at last to die.

The early days of wedded life were very peaceful and happy, for Louis XV. was at that time a very paragon of husbands. The counsels of his former governor, the Bishop of Fréjus, the sentiment of conjugal duty, his religious belief, and the ordinary bashfulness of youth, all contributed to retain the young monarch in the paths of virtue; he thought only of being a good husband and father, and a just king, and of seeking his own welfare in the well-being of his people. Passionate by nature, he attached himself to Marie Leczinska with the ardor of an innocent young man who loves for the first time. Notwithstanding the shameless behavior of some of their number, the froward beauties of the court did not yet dare to cast an impure glance upon this royal youth, whose gentle and retiring disposition imposed respect even upon the boldest. No warning note was then sounded of the licentious career upon which the young king was soon to embark. The roués of the regency were in no way reconciled to so self-contained and virtuous a monarch; they impatiently awaited the moment when they might give him a push down the slippery pathway of sin; like real devils they lay in wait for their prey.

III.

FALL OF THE MARQUISE DE PRIE.

THE Marquise de Prie congratulated herself upon having been the means of seating Marie Leczinska upon the throne. No doubt it was, as D'Argenson said, an excellent selection from her point of view,—"fertility, piety, gentleness, good temper, and better than all, utter incapacity for business. The marquise and her cabal needed only an unattractive woman, not given to flirtation, whose hold upon her husband would depend entirely upon his sense of duty, and the necessity of having legitimate heirs to the throne."

M. le Duc and his favorite had found the queen as grateful and pliable as they had dared to hope. And as for the king, fully occupied as he was with his hunting and parties and trips to Marly, Chantilly, and Rambouillet, he troubled his head but little with politics.

The first minister might well flatter himself that he would soon be a real mayor of the palace. But he had left out of his calculation a certain seventy-four-year-old churchman, whose ambition had come with age, and who was fated to sweep away with a breath the whole structure of intrigue and scheming.

Fleury, Bishop of Fréjus, preceptor of Louis XV., had begun life in a very modest way as the son of a tithe-collector in the diocese of Glandève. Upon his appointment as chaplain to Queen Marie Thérèse in 1680, "he was received at the ministers' houses," says Saint-Simon, "where, however, he was a person of no consequence, as he was everywhere else, and he used to serve the purpose of a call-bell before such things were invented."

Having been selected to fill the place of preceptor of the little fellow who was to reign as Louis XV., he completely won the favor of his pupil by his gentle, easy-going, and insinuating ways, by his perfect self-possession, and by judiciously mingling in his demeanor, reverence and affection for the child, who believed his life to be always in danger, and felt a sense of protection in such assiduous and obsequious devotion. The real secret of Louis's affection for Fleury lay in the fact that Fleury never contradicted him. Then, too, he made a show of absolute unselfishness, and affected to be sacrificing his own comfort and inclination by remaining at court, instead of taking refuge from the world within the walls of a convent. He always was on hand when the young king was at work, or making a pretence of being at work with his ministers. His attitude was, so far as appearances went, most unassuming and self-effacing; but he really wielded an influence which was a source of untold annoyance to M. le Duc, and even more so to Madame de Prie. Even the queen was jealous of the favor of this close-mouthed old fellow, who followed the king like

his shadow, and with all his affected modesty, seemed in a fair way to monopolize every source of power.

The marquise, who, as lady-in-waiting, was never at a loss for opportunities to see the queen, conceived a nice little scheme with her. Their purpose was to get rid of this inconvenient third party, who was always thrusting himself in between the king and his first minister.

"Madame de Prie devised a means of getting clear of the old bishop, which would result, as she figured, in putting herself in his place, and enabling her to become a member of the Council of State almost without disguise. She persuaded her lover to induce the king to go through with the business of the day in the apartments of the queen, whom he still loved, at least with such love as is born of passion. Her idea was that as the preceptor no longer had any lessons to give, he would not follow his pupil thither; so that, without being too roughly snubbed, he would slip out of the place he occupied, and would find himself on the cold ground without any sudden shock. Then the marquise, relying upon the queen's good-nature, counted upon insinuating herself as a fourth member of the little council, and from that vantage-ground governing the State as she chose. Although the plan was an admirable one in theory, it did not succeed to admiration." *

The little conspiracy, however was carried on with spirit. One afternoon the queen, the Duc de Bourbon being with her, sent to the king to beg him to come to her apartment.

* Mémoires de Duclos.

Louis complied with her request, and had no sooner arrived than the minister handed him a letter from the Cardinal de Polignac, containing most virulent accusations against the Bishop of Fréjus. It was the first time that Fleury had failed to be present at a consultation between the king and M. le Duc. Being convinced that the plan was to keep him out altogether thenceforth, he at once went to his own quarters, and after inditing a letter to the king, very sad in tone, but affectionate and respectful, wherein he took leave of his young master and announced his intention of ending his days in retirement, set out at once for the Sulpician Convent at Issy.

M. le Duc and Madame de Prie believed themselves certain of victory; but they were in rather too great haste to celebrate their triumph.

Upon reading his old preceptor's letter, the king began to cry bitterly. Yet he was ashamed to confess the cause of his distress, and bashful and irresolute always, he said not a word. His first gentleman of the chamber, the Duc de Mortemart, at last roused his courage. "In Heaven's name, Sire," said he, "are not you the master? Send word to M. le Duc to send a message for M. de Fréjus at once, and you will soon see him again." It was no sooner said than done. The bishop came back, and at first hid the prestige of success beneath an appearance of moderation. He pretended to wish nothing for himself, and showed profound deference to M. le Duc; but the first minister and his favorite were doomed.

The young king, with his sixteen years, undertook to demonstrate that he was indeed master. He quietly made his preparations for the downfall of M. le Duc, with that dissimulation which he had been taught from childhood to regard as an indispensable characteristic of princes. On the 11th of June, 1726, just as he was taking carriage for Rambouillet, he remarked with the utmost kindness to the first minister, "I shall expect to see you at supper this evening." The duke returned to the palace without a suspicion. Imagine his stupefaction when he received, three hours later, a royal missive thus conceived: "I command you, under the penalty of disobedience, to betake yourself to Chantilly, and there remain until further orders."

It was banishment to all intents, but M. le Duc submitted without a murmur. At the same time the queen received this laconic communication from her husband: "I beg you, Madame, and if need be command you, to do whatever the Bishop of Fréjus tells you to do in my name, as if it were myself."

The poor queen wept and submitted. As for Madame de Prie, the blow fell upon her at the same time that her lover was stricken, and she was banished to her estate of Courbepine, in Normandy. M. de Prie was amazed at this disaster. He asked everybody he met, with a laughable assumption of innocence, "What in the world have M. le Duc and my wife in common?" If we may believe Duclos, the marquise, before departing for her place of exile, had an affectionate farewell interview with some obscure lover or

other. "They were apparently too much engrossed in their leave-taking, or in too much of a hurry to think of drawing the curtains, so that some of the neighbors witnessed their touching adieux."

The very same people who had grovelled at the feet of M. le Duc and his favorite only the night before, now overwhelmed them with puns and sarcasm. Bonfires were lighted, and the walls were covered with placards whereon was printed: "Cent pistoles a gagner pour celui qui trouvera une jument DE PRIX, accoutumée à suivre un cheval borgne." *

M. Michelet, whose judgment upon the court of Louis XV. is in general so severe and pitiless, speaks somewhat leniently of the Marquise de Prie. "However harshly," he says, "history should judge the female tyrant, it is none the less a duty to call attention to the vigorous support she gave to Duverney, and his courageous attempts [at financial reform]. Her barbarous sway, violent and selfishly cynical though it was, yet had some germs of real vitality, whose absence one might well regret in the deathly stagnation of the torpor which followed it." This indulgent tone is hardly explicable, for in the brief reign of M. le Duc and his mistress it is impossible to discover a trace of morality or of true grandeur.

It is by no means a trifling matter for an ambitious coquette, accustomed to see her slightest whims obeyed

* "A hundred pistoles reward to the finder of a valuable (*de prix*) mare, generally in company with a one-eyed horse." M. le Duc had but one eye.

like ordained laws, to endure disgrace and humiliation and enforced seclusion. Madame de Prie deceived herself at first. She fancied that she would soon be recalled to Versailles; but when she realized her error, and learned that her position as lady-in-waiting had been taken from her and given to the Marquise d'Arlincourt, she had a painful awakening. In the words of M. Michelet, "She consumed her own heart, and could not conceal her suffering. Never did lion or tiger struggle so desperately in its cage. She went mad and wrote chansons. She longed to die, and toward the last she strove to end her own life by reckless indulgence in debauchery, but in vain. She only succeeded in destroying her health, her bloom, and her beauty. Even *in extremis* she still kept a friend of each sex with her in her desolation. Her female friend, ill-tempered, and corrupt, a veritable she-cat, was no other than Madame Du Deffand, and the two friends clawed at one another all day between their kisses. Her lover, an estimable young man, persisted in his attachment, vile as she was. Her pride consumed her. She had no wish left except to die like one of the Roman matrons of whom Petronius tells us."

All this seems to us much overdone. Madame de Prie was, in our opinion, too shallow to be capable of such exalted despair. Even before her fall, she had made the acquaintance of those alternations of melancholy and madness which are inseparable from a vicious life, even when it seems to bring enjoyment. It was a long time since her taste of intrigue, her thirst for dissipation, and

her ardent ambition had kindled in her veins a fever which was preying upon her vitals. Her plump and well-rounded figure had become extraordinarily spare. Struggling heroically against her malady, she tried to overcome it, to show a bold front to fate, to forget her cares, and find distraction for her thoughts. Although she was so changed in physical appearance, the Marquis d'Argenson tells us that her wit was as keen and sparkling, as playful and trifling, as in her hey-day of prosperity. Even in adversity, she still had courtiers who deceived her. She had become ugly, but her flatterers still assured her that she was as lovely as ever. She was sick unto death, and her physicians told her that she was in remarkably good health. Two days before she died she took part in a comedy, and recited three hundred lines without a lapse of memory, and with true feeling. She had, however, predicted that her death was near.

But, it was said, that was mere foolery and joking. And so, when she breathed her last, on the 6th of October, 1728, after such terrible convulsions that her toes were turned toward her heels, the report at once spread that she had poisoned herself. This theory of suicide has no element of probability, and Madame de Prie's superficial character would hardly admit such a supposition. M. Michelet adds the detail that she went through the farce of a confession (*bouffonna une confession*). This sort of expression is commonly used by this historian, who too often lets his imagination run away with him.

What can M. Michelet know about it? Why does he

assume to declare that she did not really repent of her sins and her errors? Greater sinners than she have been blessed by a gleam of heavenly radiance at the last, supreme moment.

This much is certain, that the sudden and terrible death of this young woman of twenty-nine years, who so bitterly atoned for the success which she had won by dishonor, was a striking lesson to her contemporaries. Was Madame de Prie sincere in her conversion at the eleventh hour? God alone can tell.

IV.

THE KING STILL FAITHFUL TO THE QUEEN.

FOR several years the king's life gave no cause for scandal. Faithful to his religious obligations, he bore himself as a good Christian and a good husband. The courtiers, accustomed to the licentious morals of the Regency, could not conceal their surprise or their discontent.

In January, 1729, one day when there had been some drag-hunting, the old Maréchal de Villars wrote in his diary: "These drag-hunts have raised the hope in the female breast that there may be a little more sport in store for them. There was dancing after supper, and if this happens frequently, it is by no means impossible that some saucy young beauty may begin to make eyes at the king."

But the saucy young beauty did not materialize. The repellent civility, and freezing regard of the young king kept all the women at a distance. Louis XV. gave no sign of capitulation. People wondered what was the controlling element in his taciturnity and extreme reserve. Was it pride or bashfulness, generosity or egotism, wisdom or weariness?

The king's character, which he by no means comprehended himself, was an enigma to his courtiers. Versailles,

under the guiding hand of an old priest, seemed like another Escurial, and the *petits appartements*, destined to attain such scandalous notoriety in the future, were at this time as quiet and peaceful as a convent or sanctuary. If some one spoke to the king of the charms of this or that celebrated beauty, he would simply reply: "She is no fairer than the queen."

Marie Leczinska, by her kindly disposition, her utter ignorance of intrigue, her submissive and gentle spirit, held her husband to his faith to her. Averse to all pomp and show, she lived the life of a worthy bourgeoise, — charitable, unassuming, and devoted to the care of her spiritual welfare. For more than three years after her arrival in France, she never saw Paris. She paid her first visit to the capital on the 4th of October, 1728, when she made a sort of pious pilgrimage thither. In the preceding year she had given birth to twins, Louise Elisabeth and Henriette de France; she was now longing for a son, and it was to obtain fulfilment of that longing that she went to invoke the intercession of the Holy Virgin in the churches of Paris. The advocate Barbier tells the story of this excursion in these words in his journal: —

"OCTOBER.

"On Monday the 4th, our good queen visited Paris. She came to Notre Dame to pray to the Virgin for a dauphin, and from thence she went to Sainte Geneviève on the same errand. She made the journey *incognito* to a certain extent; that is to say, it was not a formal *entry*. She

was attended only by her ordinary suite, which consists of four eight-horsed carriages. In regard to her Majesty's personal appearance, she is of small build, slender rather than stout, by no means pretty, yet not at all unpleasant to look at; she has a very sweet and gentle manner, which is lacking in that quality of majesty which one looks for in a queen. She made quite a trip around Paris, and saw an extraordinary number of persons. They say that as much as twelve thousand livres in silver was thrown amidst the crowd from her carriage."

Marie Leczinska's prayer was granted. In the following year she brought forth a son (September 4, 1729). In ten years she presented the king with ten children. And yet there seemed to be no sort of sympathetic intercourse between them. During the day they barely spoke to one another. One would have said that their mutual connection was maintained only through a sense of duty, and for the good of the State. Coldly civil and reserved, they repelled one another.

Did the queen really possess that degree of tact which would have enabled her to hold Louis to the narrow path of virtue and honor? We may well doubt it. Her open and simple nature was a stranger alike to craft and diplomacy. The by-ways of feminine coquetry were untrodden ground to her. If we may believe D'Argenson she was quite without tact. "When the queen came to the French court," he says, "she imagined that she had discovered it to be the proper thing to make light of her husband's advances, and

of the joys of married life. She assumed to act accordingly, and to affect indifference and disgust. 'Is there no purpose in life' she would say, 'except to be always going to bed, always enceinte, and forever lying-in?' Consequently she would keep the king at arms-length for long periods, on the pretext that her health required it. She seemed then to despise what she regrets bitterly enough to-day."

D'Argenson, who seems to revel in this back-stairs gossip, adds these further details: "The queen is afraid of ghosts. To allay her fears she must always have one of her ladies at hand during the night, and the poor wretch is kept busy telling her stories to make her sleepy. She never is allowed to leave until the moment that the king arrives. The queen scarcely sleeps at all, but is up and down a hundred times in the night. She always ends by feeling so chilly that she has to throw an extra bed-puff over her, which nearly stifles the king; and finally, his endurance being exhausted, he gets up in a reeking perspiration, and goes back to his own room and his own bed for a little comfortable sleep. It was this sort of treatment which first made the excursions to Rambouillet so attractive to him, and drew him gradually into infidelity."

In like manner D'Argenson blames Marie Leczinska for having neglected to do what she ought to make her society agreeable to her husband. "In the first days of their married life, the king was inclined to pass his evenings with the queen at cards or in conversation. But she, instead of trying to attract him, making him feel at home there,

and doing her best to entertain him, was forever playing the scornful, and turning up her nose. The king naturally soon got enough of that, and formed the habit of passing the evening in his own apartments, at first with male companions only, subsequently with the ladies, his cousin Charolais and the Comtesse de Toulouse among others. He is by nature very bashful, and seeks the companionship of those with whom he feels at home. When he has once fallen in with such, it becomes very clear how entirely he is a creature of habit."

The queen tried in vain to address her husband in the language of passion or to indulge in jealous recriminations. Louis XV. detested everything which had a smack of exaggeration. In his eyes his wife's anger was a mere whim, a forgetfulness of etiquette, or a failure to pay him due respect. As early as 1726 the Maréchal de Villars urged Marie Leczinska to be quiet and submissive. "The queen," he says in his "Mémoires," "took me into her cabinet, and spoke to me with bitter grief of the change which she noticed in the king's affection. Her tears came fast. I said to her: 'I think, Madame, that the king knows nothing of what is called love; his feeling for you is by no means the same as yours for him; but believe me, you should not allow your affection to show itself too openly, so that no one may detect your dread of his cooling toward you; lest, in that event, all these bright eyes which are so intently fixed on him may bring all their powers to bear to take advantage of his change in sentiment. Besides, it is much

better for you that the king should not be too susceptible; for where love is concerned, natural indifference is less cruel than desertion.'"

What is to be the fate of this wavering, bashful, irresolute prince, who knows not his own mind? Which path will he choose, this youth who stands hesitating, like Hercules in the fable, between Virtue and Pleasure? Will he become a saint or a rake? Will he seek relief from his ennui in useful occupation, or in vice? He would much prefer the straight path, but will he have the courage to follow it? Everything conspires to guide him into the broad road that leads to sin. His moral tendencies are ridiculed. The very air which he breathes is vice-laden. The women, who never cease to tempt him, vie with one another in ogling and coquetry. His former preceptor, now an omnipotent minister, does not dare to proffer a word of advice. His first valet-de-chambre, Bachelier, is already dreaming of the rôle of procurer, and the great nobles, the Duc de Richelieu at their head, are no less eager to share the profits of those disgraceful but lucrative functions. Who will venture to reprove the monarch if he sets a scandalous example? The clergy hold their peace, and the nobles have only one suggestion to make: it is that the king should choose his mistresses from among the ladies of quality. Dishonor must be veiled beneath a coat of arms. The bourgeoisie are too prudent to pry into the secrets of Olympus. D'Argenson and Barbier, the nobleman and the lawyer, will be equally indulgent in their strictures upon the king's infidelity.

In the eyes of D'Argenson, the only fault which a royal favorite can commit is to try to interfere in politics. "It's all very well," he says, "for private individuals to confide in a mistress whom they believe to be sincerely attached to them. I like to see it, for it causes little comment, and is edifying and honorable according to the lax moral standard of the day, which is rapidly nearing what it was in the early days of creation."

The advocate Barbier goes even farther. He says in his journal, with an astonishing mixture of cynicism and ingenuousness: "Out of twenty prominent courtiers, there are fifteen who do not live with their wives, and who have mistresses; and nothing is more common among private individuals. How absurd it is, then, that the king, who is their master, should be worse off than his predecessors."

The courtiers could not get used to the lack of a royal mistress. "There is a vacant post," they thought, "which must be filled. It is impossible to think of Henri IV. without the fair Gabrielle, or of Louis XIV. without La Vallière and Montespan. And yet," they would say indignantly, "here is Louis XV. tied down to his wife, this unattractive Pole, who is seven years his senior!" In their eyes such a state of things was an outrage upon all the traditions of French gallantry. The military men, weary of the stagnation of peace, pictured to themselves a favorite like Agnes Sorel, rousing this new Charles VII. from his sluggish inaction, and urging him on to conquest. The young people of fashion were convinced that under the reign of a mistress,

Versailles would brighten up at last, and that they would have their fill of parties and suppers and theatricals, and diversions of every sort.

The enemies of Cardinal Fleury, all those who were eager for office or credit or plunder, told themselves that a mistress would surely overturn the old minister, who was always sitting on the lid of the treasure-chest. Ah! if the monarch does give way, if he yields to temptation, the culprits are his cynical, corrupt, selfish advisers, who lead him into evil, deify his whims, and applaud his licentious excesses. Richelieu, the official pander; Voltaire, who celebrates the shameful reign of the favorites in prose and verse; and the women who beg this Christian sultan of theirs to throw them the handkerchief, — one and all of these, yes, and the age itself, are more responsible and culpable than the king.

V.

THE ELEVATION OF THE COMTESSE DE MAILLY.

THERE are two varieties of royal favorites: the proud and the meek; those who plume themselves upon their shame, and those who blush at it. The haughty ones wear their dishonor like an emblem of victory. In their insatiable greed for wealth, influence, and pleasure, they grow drunken on the fumes of the incense which is burned at their feet, and proudly wave on high the sceptre of queen *de la main gauche.*

The meek variety are less preposterous in their acts and demands. They gladly shrink from publicity, and try to make excuses to themselves for being found in a situation of which they fully appreciate the degradation; and while they lack the necessary moral courage voluntarily to forego the profits of their position, they have not sufficient impudence to urge imperiously their claim to homage or adulation. Madame de Montespan, in the time of Louis XIV., was a perfect specimen of the haughty mistress. We must class among the meek and humble the first mistress of Louis XV., the Comtesse de Mailly.

Louise-Julie de Mailly-Nesle, the eldest of the five sisters all of whom played leading parts at court, was of about

the king's age, having been born in the same year, 1710. Married in 1726 to her cousin-german, Comte Louis-Alexandre de Mailly, she was but poorly supplied with this world's goods, and it was said that her fatal errors were largely due to her need of money. The huntsman Le Roy, that *lieutenant des chasses* who carried such a shrewdly observant head upon his shoulders, and whom Sainte-Beuve has called "La Bruyère in the saddle," has sketched the comtesse's portrait thus: "This lady was very far from being pretty, but her figure was graceful and her manners very pleasing. She had great delicacy of feeling, and an obliging, kindly disposition, which led her to dispense with unnecessary formality. This last quality was essential to enable her to overcome the bashfulness of a prince who was still so unsophisticated that the slightest reserve would have frightened him off. There was no doubt of her disinterestedness, or of her entire freedom from ambitious schemes. It was a difficult matter to bring about a satisfactory understanding between an excessively shy young man and a woman upon whom her rank imposed some little regard to propriety."

Madame de Mailly was one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, and that simplified matters somewhat. At first the intrigue was carried on with the utmost secrecy. "I have just learned," says the Duc de Luynes in his "Mémoires," "that the king's liaison with Madame de Mailly dates back to 1733. I know this from a perfectly trustworthy source, and yet no one has had a suspicion of it in all this time."

The connection was not publicly known until four years after that, when the advocate Barbier declared "that there was nothing to be said, as the name of Nesle was one of the first in the kingdom." "The queen is in a cruel position," says D'Argenson, "because of Madame de Mailly, whom she is forced to retain as lady-in-waiting. During the weeks when she is in attendance her Majesty is in a terrible humor, and all her servants find it out. The greatest service any one can do her is to be on hand after supper to prevent the possibility of her being left tête-à-tête with Madame de Mailly."

After a short time the poor queen submitted. When a woman no longer appeals to a man's passion or his heart, what can she do? One day Madame de Mailly asked her mistress's leave to go to some country-house where Louis was then staying; Marie Leczinska replied simply, "You are the mistress."

Cardinal Fleury was not disposed to complain, for the favorite did not meddle in politics, nor did she cost the king much. Louis XV. at this time was as stingy as he was bashful. The Comte de Mailly, who had set up a horse and carriage when his wife's favor first began, soon had to sell it again, and continued to live almost in destitution.

In 1738, when Madame de Mailly was formally endowed with the title of mistress, Louis XV. changed his bed-chamber. He left the one in which Louis XIV. died, and which he had himself occupied since 1722, for the room adjoining the Salle du Conseil, and which was known in

Louis the XIV.'s time as the Cabinet de Billard (salle No. 126 of M. Eudore Soulié's "Notice du Musée de Versailles").

Louis XV. found this apartment more convenient than the other because it was the first of a series of small rooms called the Cabinets (Nos. 126 to 134 of the "Notice")* where he used to receive on familiar terms a very select circle of courtiers. It was there that he hid himself from the eyes of the vulgar crowd; there, living more like a private individual than a king, that he wasted his time in frivolities and trifling pursuits unworthy of a sovereign. It was there that he worked at the embroidery frame, like a woman, or served up an *entremet aux truffles*, like a cook. It was there that, at the suppers which followed the hunting parties, he sought to drown his remorse in bumpers of champagne. It was there that he hoped to find a cure for his spleen, which was, alas, beyond cure; there that he surrendered at discretion to his deadly enemy, debauchery.

Immediately beneath the king's apartments were the quarters of the Comtesse de Toulouse, the widow of the son of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan.† The comtesse occupied the suite called the Appartement des Bains, which was formerly the abiding-place of the Marquise de Montespan, and had afterwards been given to the two sons of the famous favorite, — the Duc du Maine first, and then to

* This bedchamber of Louis XV. and the cabinets adjoining are now used as the suite of the president of the National Assembly.

† The Comte de Toulouse died in 1737.

the Comte de Toulouse (Nos. 52, 53, and 54 of the "Notice"). This suite had one great recommendation, — it communicated by a secret staircase with the king's business-cabinet. The Comte de Toulouse had the key to this precious stairway, and when he died his widow was clever enough to induce the king to let her keep it. She was at this time a woman of about fifty years, who had given up rouge, and often passed several hours together in a confessional in the royal chapel, reading by the light of a candle. Notwithstanding the external austerity of her life, she was the devoted friend of the Comtesse de Mailly, and evil-tongued gossips said that she assisted in arranging meetings between her and the king.

There was still another female member of Louis's select circle of intimates, — Mademoiselle de Charolais, who was born in 1695, and died unmarried in 1758. A sister of the Duc de Bourbon, she had inherited the Condé pride, with the *esprit des Mortemart.* She was a type of the extravagant *grande dame*, a capricious, clever creature, thirsting for distraction and dissipation, roguish as an imp and saucy as a page. "This princess is a great convenience to the king," says the Marquis d'Argenson; "she keeps Madame de Mailly in countenance, and sometimes intersperses her compliments with a suggestion to the king that he ought to find a prettier mistress. Again, she will advise Madame de Mailly to take advantage of her influence and do better for herself in the way of wealth and titles. Madame de Mailly is endowed with perfect good faith, a clear sense of right,

and a kind heart. Those qualities are what sustain her in spite of her hare-brained disposition and the diversity of counsels with which she is tormented. But as she is noble-minded, for all her poverty, her demands are not excessive, and she has no part in underground, devious intrigue."

Among the personages surrounding the king whose influence over him was considerable, we must not forget his first valet-de-chambre, Bachelier, his master's confidential friend, — Bachelier, with his secret power, his income of fifty thousand livres, and his charming little country house, La Celle, which his sovereign had honored with a visit. Let us listen once more to D'Argenson: "This Bachelier is a philosopher, well content with his lot, which is a happy one. He has a good income, a fine place in the country, and a mistress. He loves his master, and his affection is reciprocated; he is disposed to treat the public fairly. People of this stamp are hard to displace; it is to similar characteristics that one cardinal (Fleury) owes his power and his lofty position, and it is fortunate for France that the king esteems people of that sort. To be sure, Bachelier is no better than a pander (D'Argenson makes use of a more expressive word), but that is as much a part of his office as it is a part of a soldier's duty to slay his fellow-men. It may have been he who advised the king to content himself with a single mistress, as he has done so far with little Mailly; or at least, to change but seldom and not to squander money or influence upon them."

Nothing great or noble could result from such companionship. This life of sensuality, an unpoetic, spiritless parody of the pictures of Lancret and Watteau, weakened and deadened the king's moral principle. What useful lesson could he learn from a frivolous, idle creature like Madame de Mailly, engrossed with jewels and wigs? By dint of listening from morn till night to such purposeless, petty twaddle, Louis XV. became like a woman himself. His thoughts were paltry, and his ideas contracted. He wasted his time over silly tittle-tattle, unworthy of a king, unworthy of a man. Madame de Mailly had not wit enough to amuse him, nor tact enough to guide him. After a while she bored him to death. He kept her by his side, but was always on the watch for something new. His infidelity needed fresh stimulus.

VI.

THE COMTESSE DE VINTIMILLE.

IN 1738 the Comtesse de Mailly had been for five years the mistress, or more accurately speaking, the slave, of Louis XV. She no longer had any attraction for him and he put up with her presence only from habit. He was bored to such a degree that Madame de Mailly was anxious to furnish distraction for his thoughts at any price. She had a young sister, Pauline Félicité, who had finished her education, but was still living in the convent where she had received it, for economical reasons. This young woman, who was in no sense of a devout turn, felt as if she were a prisoner. She chafed at the bit. Clever, ambitious, and eager to make herself a name in the world, she was forever contemplating in her vivid fancy the splendor of the palace of Versailles. "Why, pray, should I not be enjoying myself?" Good Madame de Mailly did not allow herself to be alarmed by the fear of a possible rival. On the other hand, she thought that her sister would be an invaluable ally, and that, since it was absolutely necessary that there should be a new-comer in the select circle of the cabinets, it was much better that the Nesle family should furnish her. Félicité

would drive away the king's spleen. The suppers would no longer be eaten in funereal gloom. Louis would smooth the wrinkles from his brow, and her position would be saved. Madame de Mailly showed the king the imploring letters in which her young sister spoke of Versailles as an Eldorado, which she visited in her dreams. To be summoned to court was, to her mind, the summit of earthly bliss. Louis, flattered by her very great earnestness, granted her wish. Mademoiselle de Nesle arrived at Versailles in December, 1738, and at first acted simply as companion to her sister. She soon attracted the king, by her more than lively disposition and her sprightly boarding-school ways. No excursion or supper-party was complete without her, and it would seem that she became Louis's mistress in 1739. He at once set about finding a husband for her.

The monarch, thus fairly launched upon the sea of vice, was by no means untroubled by remorse, and his gloom increased in proportion as he sunk deeper into the mire.

When Holy Week arrived in 1739, he had some secret prickings of conscience which worried him sorely. The saying of Massillon was fully exemplified in him: "The crime which you pursue so eagerly pursues you in its turn like a greedy vulture, and fastens upon you to rend your heart, and punish you for all the pleasure it afforded you." *

Louis XV. thoroughly corrupted as he was, was none the less a believer. He suffered because he was acting against his conscience, and his conscience spoke in louder tones

* Massillon, Sermon upon the "Evidence of the Law."

than all his flatterers. The more he was fawned upon, the less pleased he was with himself. There is nothing so deplorable as the plight of a man who believes, but does not act up to his belief, who attends religious services, kneels before the altar, and prays, or tries to pray, and still does not become a true convert. Religious ceremonies, however affecting and poetic they may be, no longer have any power to console him; they are like scourges to his conscience. You find your remorse waiting for you wherever you go. The church music, if it is sad, increases your unrest still more; if it is joyous and glad, its lightsomeness brings out in the greater contrast the bitter pain at your heart. The soul knows that there is no longer any joy for it. At times you loathe the woman who keeps you from your duty; she appears to you as she really is, your deadly foe, your evil genius. But the habit of sinning regains the upper hand. Remorse dozes for a moment, and the Holy Week has passed. But the wound remains at the bottom of your heart, uncured and incurable.

Louis did not dare to attend communion in 1739. He had been told of blasphemous men who had fallen stone dead in the very act of raising the Host to their lips, and thus receiving their own damnation. That remembrance caused him to reflect, and when the Provost-General asked him if he intended to touch for the king's evil, which the kings of France could not do unless they had first presented themselves at the communion-table, he replied curtly: "No."

A king of France not receive the sacrament at Easter! A descendant of Saint-Louis putting himself upon the same level with a disciple of Voltaire! Scandalous!

In this connection Barbier wrote in his journal: "It is hazardous for a king to set such an example to his people; we are on sufficiently good terms with the Pope to make it easy for the true son of the Church to procure a dispensation entitling him to receive the sacrament without impiety and with a clear conscience, whatever his moral condition may be." A strange understanding of religion this!

The effect of this incident at court was very bad, even at that apparently impious period. D'Argenson himself voiced the prevailing sentiment: "They were very anxious to save appearances by having Cardinal de Rohan celebrate low mass in the king's closet, in the presence of Père de Linières. Very great care was taken to conceal the fact that his Majesty was not present, either at confession, or the administration of the sacrament."

Some months later (September 29, 1739,) the king found a husband for Mademoiselle de Nesle. He married her to the Comte * de Vintimille, and condescended to "hand the husband the shirt," with his own royal hand. † It was the first time that Louis had thus honored anybody. On the 1st of January, 1740, Madame de Vintimille was the only lady at court to whom he gave a New Year's present.

* Marquis (?). — *Note by Translator.*

† For the king to *donner la chemise* to a bridegroom on his wedding night was esteemed the greatest possible honor. — *Note by Translator.*

But the new favorite was far from becoming wealthy. The king, who subsequently was so lavish, was more than cheese-paring at this time. The great majority of his courtiers used to say of him, as was said of Peter the Great when he was in France, "He makes love like a porter, and pays on the same model."

The Marquis de Nesle, father of these royal favorites, was always in very straitened circumstances. In November, 1739, he was unexpectedly banished to Lisieux, notwithstanding the influence of his daughters, because he had spoken arrogantly of "his wretched law-suit with his wretched creditors." D'Argenson was very indignant with such harsh treatment. "They have tried," he said, "to make the king perform a deed *à la Romaine*, worthy of Manlius Torquatus or Brutus, in visiting this severe punishment upon him who is by nature and for all purposes his father-in-law, for a mild attack upon a simple Master of Requests. This has caused general amazement; for, after all, one does assume certain obligations in entering upon a love affair, especially when one wears a crown, and is really warmly attached to a subject."

Towards the close of 1740 Madame de Vintimille was known to be enceinte. Louis, so the gossips said, had more reasons than one for taking a deep interest in the favorite's condition. It may be that he dreamed of sharing parental joys with her. Empty dreams! In the absence of pure feeling and honest affection, there can be only disappointment and sorrow.

Madame de Vintimille gave birth to a son in August, 1741. The king went to her door to inquire for her three or four times a day. He was wild with delight over the child, and the mother seemed to be at the very height of favor.

But the punishment of Heaven follows close upon sin. Madame de Vintimille had a sharp attack of miliary fever. On the 9th of September she died in horrible agony, so suddenly that she had no time to receive the sacraments.

Louis was appalled. In the sight of God and man he felt himself responsible for her death. The lover had unwittingly become the executioner. He seemed to be crushed under the weight of an implacable curse, and in utter self-loathing he begged the forgiveness of the dead, and of his God. When he tried to speak, his words were broken by sobs, and he relapsed into melancholy silence. Confined to his bed, ill and despairing, he had mass said in his chamber, and men wondered if he would seek relief from his remorse in the life of a recluse.

Madame de Mailly, losing sight of the rival in the lamented sister, went every day to pray at her tomb, and it was in memory of his second mistress that Louis drew nearer to the first. She had this in her favor, that he could weep with her, and pour his grief into her sympathetic ears.

VII.

FALL OF THE COMTESSE DE MAILLY.

LOUIS XV. and Madame de Mailly mingled their tears of regret for Madame de Vintimille. But those who thought him inconsolable had very little insight into his character; his projects of mending his ways were naught but slight, unsubstantial promptings of his conscience.

He had not enough strength of mind to break the long chain of his misdeeds. Not only did the lamentable end of Madame de Vintimille fail to turn him to better things, he plunged anew into the vortex of debauchery, with a celerity for which he had not even the excuse of an overmastering passion.

Madame de Mailly continued to be titular favorite, but the king had long been indifferent to her. She passed another year at court after the death of Madame de Vintimille, — a year of distress, humiliation, and sorrow. Louis forced the poor, forlorn creature to drink the bitter cup to the very dregs, and made her so unhappy that even the queen pitied her.

What is more pitiful than the death-agony of love? To see that one is deceived, that the being whom one believed

to be kind-hearted, generous, and grateful, is malicious, selfish, and an ingrate; to encounter harsh words instead of gentle, selfish egotism instead of devotion, — what a cruel awakening, what refinement of torture! And yet one cannot complain. Good morals, propriety, and religion, all call upon you to suffer in silence. If you sigh, the world laughs at you. Your misery arouses contempt rather than compassion. You cannot acknowledge your grief to God or man. The creature who maltreats and insults you, who betrays you and ruins your life, — alas! you love him still, with a passion which has come to be naught but unwomanly madness. You debase and mortify yourself, and grovel at his feet, and all to no purpose. Your cause is lost forever, and nothing remains for you but to languish and die.

Such was the unhappy lot of poor Madame de Mailly. It was not enough for her to lose her hold upon the king's heart; for her was reserved the sad fate of finding in her own sister, Madame de la Tournelle, not a rival only, but a relentless persecutor.

Marie-Anne de Mailly-Nesle, so notorious afterwards under the name of Duchesse de Châteauroux, was the fifth and youngest daughter of the Marquis de Nesle. Born in 1717, she married in 1734 the Marquis de la Tournelle, an extremely devout young man, who spent the greater part of his moderate income in charity. Widowed in 1740, at the age of twenty-two, she took up her abode with her relative the Duchesse de Mazarin, who was lady of the bedchamber to the queen. Two years later the duchess died,

and Madame de la Tournelle was left without a roof to cover her head. But the king had already taken favorable note of her beauty, and she was appointed one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting (September, 1742). M. de Maurepas and Cardinal Fleury, who detested her, and thus early foresaw in her a powerful foe, waged bitter war against her. But she had for friend and adviser the boldest and craftiest of the courtiers of Louis XV., — the Duc de Richelieu. The Marquis d'Argenson painted this personage, so famous in the magnificent licentiousness of the eighteenth century, in these words: —

"He affords too exaggerated an idea of what we ought to esteem the shortcomings of the monarchy, and the fundamental weakness of our generation. His name has been in men's mouths ever since he was twelve years old. Thrice he was imprisoned in the Bastille, for three offences well calculated to shed lustre upon a court-hero: for having made love to the dauphine, the king's mother; for fighting a duel; and for conspiring against the State. His love of dissipation is due rather to desire for notoriety than to real enjoyment. He is very much the rage among the ladies, and the rivalries and jealousies of the coquettes have been worth a great deal to him. His career has been marked by no real feeling, but by unlimited indulgence. He has succeeded in deceiving a credulous sex; he has mistaken mere passion for love. He is not fortunate enough to possess one real friend. He is unreserved from thoughtlessness, suspicious from contempt of mankind and from calculation, ungra-

cious from lack of sensibility and from general misanthropy. Such is the sorry model which sets the fashion for a careless, fickle society like ours."

The Duc de Richelieu counted upon holding the reins of power under cover of Madame de la Tournelle, whose inspiration and guide he was. This affair aroused his enthusiastic interest. Allowing his enthusiasm for his sorry rôle of procurer to carry him to the verge of poetry, he cried, in an excess of jealous ardor: "I propose that any one who gets as far as Madame de la Tournelle's reception-room shall be of more account than one who used to be admitted to a tête-à-tête with Madame de Mailly." *

The new favorite, before yielding to the king, imposed certain conditions. Haughty and domineering, as are most beautiful women who are surrounded by flatterers, she demanded guaranties, and transformed an affair of the heart into a diplomatic negotiation.

"Love," says La Rochefoucauld, "lends its name to an endless number of transactions which are charged to its account, but in which it has no more place or part than the Doge has in what is going on at Venice."

Madame de la Tournelle was not in love, but she was laying plans for the future. Far more absolute than Madame de Vintimille, who had been content to share her power with Madame de Mailly, she proposed to reign alone. Her demands covered not only money and influence, but

* Mémoires du duc de Luynes.

the final dismissal of her sister. That, however, was not an easy matter to bring about. The thought of leaving Versailles smote Madame de Mailly to the heart. She was so humble, so modest, so patient and submissive, that Louis had not the heart to drive her away. From time to time he had spasms of reminiscence which made him pity her, even though his attachment was irrevocably broken. He would have been glad to keep by him, as a faithful servant, the poor creature whose gentleness and kind heart he could not overlook. But Madame de la Tournelle was inflexible. She had declared that she would never become the king's mistress until Madame de Mailly should have been sent away, never to return.

Weakness often makes men wicked. Louis XV., ordinarily so affable and pleasant, visited the very extreme of harsh treatment upon his former mistress. She thought that she might move him by sacrificing herself, and resigning her position as lady-in-waiting to make way for another sister, Madame de Flavacourt, who was in Madame de la Tournelle's good graces (November, 1742). But even this immolation of self failed to touch the king's hard heart, and he seemed to take pleasure in driving the woman, whose love had become a bore and an annoyance to him, to the verge of despair.

The Duc de Luynes makes no secret of his sympathy for the fallen star. "Her condition," he says, "is so much the more pitiable, because she really loves the king, and is as eager for his renown as she is attached to him person-

ally. She has many friends, and deservedly, for she never injured a soul, but has always been, on the other hand, eager to be of service to every one. They say that the king said to her some days since: 'I have promised to speak freely to you. I am madly in love with Madame de la Tournelle; she is not mine yet, but she soon will be.' Madame de la Tournelle says that M. d'Agénois loves her, and that she returns his love; that she has no wish to win the love of the king; that he can best please her by leaving her as she is; and that she will not consent to his proposals except upon definite and advantageous terms."

Everybody was sorry for Madame de Mailly: Fleury, because she had never meddled in politics; the women, because she was not beautiful; and the courtiers, because she had made herself very useful to them. The queen also was touched by her plight. She showed very great consideration for a mistress who was so modest and tactful. The Duc de Luynes says that "the queen seemed to take much interest in Madame de Mailly's situation, and to be anxious that she should be well provided for."

D'Argenson quite loses his temper with the faithless monarch. The year before he had refused to believe in the report of Louis's double liaison with Mesdames de Mailly and de Vintimille. At that time he wrote: "No two sisters were ever more closely united than these; what probability is there that they would continue to be on good terms if they were disputing the possession of so noble and precious a heart? But people will only credit what is evil." At that

time D'Argenson had no doubt of the sincerity of his master's remorse. "Madame de Vintimille's death," said he, "has sent the king back to his devotions. He is living on with Madame de Mailly, as M. le Duc is said to have lived with Madame d'Egmont, in Platonic friendship. He has an eloquent heart. Of how few of his subjects can the same be said to-day! He is grateful for the sincere attachment displayed on all sides. He loves kind hearts; it may be that he was born to be the pride and joy of the world."

But hear the marquis a year later, furious at having been fooled: "Great news!" he cries; "the king has dismissed Madame de Mailly to take up with her sister, Madame de la Tournelle. The whole proceeding has been characterized by extraordinary brutality on the part of the Very Christian monarch. It is really one sister who has driven the other out; she demanded her dismissal, and the fact of this third sister being taken for a mistress makes many people think that the second, Madame de Vintimille, occupied the same position. For my own part, I have always maintained that the king's excessive grief for the death of Madame de Vintimille was nothing more than an entirely praiseworthy sentiment for the sister of his dear friend, whose marriage he had himself arranged. But now, farewell to this illusion of virtuous sentiment! He was then deceiving his mistress, and had led Madame de Vintimille to play the part of an ingrate. He looks upon the child that she left as his son, and he often has him brought to his closet on the sly.

Everything is cleared up now. He who has the third sister ought consistently to have had the second as well."

Madame de Mailly at last gave up the unequal struggle. "My sacrifice is consummated," she cried, "and I shall die of grief; but I will go to Paris this evening." She finally left Versailles, with streaming eyes, heartbroken and almost mad (November, 1742). After she had gone the king wrote letter after letter to her, to tell her — does it seem credible? — of his love for Madame de la Tournelle! This time, said he, his heart was "fixed forever, Madame de la Tournelle having just so much wit as was needed to make her perfectly charming." The inconstant monarch boasted, in this more than remarkable correspondence, of "the general commendation bestowed upon his choice."

The new favorite exulted in her victory with savage exultation. MM. de Goncourt, in their clever and entertaining work upon the "Maîtresses de Louis XV.,"* have published the curious letter which she wrote at this time to her confidential adviser, the Duc de Richelieu: —

"Meuse will surely have written you of the difficulty I had in packing off Madame de Mailly; I have at last succeeded in having the order issued that she shall never return. You may think, perhaps, that that leaf is turned down. By no manner of means; for he is beside himself with grief, and never writes me a single letter in which he does not

* "Les Maîtresses de Louis XV.," by Edmond and Jules de Goncourt. 2 vols. Firmin-Didot. (Now republished in three separate volumes, viz.: "La Duchesse de Châteauroux et ses Sœurs," "Madame de Pompadour," and "La Du Barry." — *Note by Translator.*)

mention it, and beg me to let her come back, swearing that he will never go near her, but entreating me to see her now and then. I have just received one in which he says that if I refuse him I shall soon be relieved of himself as well as her, meaning me to understand evidently that they will both die of grief. As it is by no means agreeable to me to have her here, I expect to remain firm. The king must have written you that affairs are all arranged, so far as we are concerned, for he tells me in his note this morning to undeceive you, because he does not wish you to believe what is not true. It is true that when he wrote you he thought it would be this evening; but I raised some objections, for which I am not sorry."

Before the end of the year matters were adjusted. Madame de Mailly, after exhausting herself in prayers and weeping, acknowledged herself definitively beaten. Louis paid her debts, gave her a pension of ten thousand livres, in addition to twelve thousand which she had before, and furnished a house for her in Rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre, Paris, where she took up her abode. Thenceforth Madame de la Tournelle exercised, without dispute and without a rival, the official functions of royal mistress.

VIII.

REIGN OF THE DUCHESSE DE CHÂTEAUROUX.

IF it is true that Louis XV. was a degenerate copy of Louis XIV. it is equally true that his mistresses stand on a lower level than those of the great king. Madame de Mailly, with all her sweetness and her penitence, was not a La Vallière. Madame de la Tournelle, with all the prestige of the title of Duchesse de Châteauroux, and with all her ambition and pride, could never be a Montespan. Pretty she was, no doubt; her great blue eyes, her skin of dazzling whiteness, her expression, — impassioned and roguish at once, — made her a fascinating creature. But she was not a "stunning, triumphant mistress" (*maîtresse tonnante et triomphante*), as Madame de Sévigné called Madame de Montespan; she was not that style of favorite whom "one would care to exhibit before the ambassadors." Despite her noble birth and her lofty schemes, there was always something cheap and tawdry about her, — as there was about Louis himself.

Scarcely had she assumed the functions of her new position when Cardinal de Fleury died, at the great age of ninety (January, 1743). Louis XIV. had said, when

Mazarin died, "At last, I am king!" Louis XV. made no higher claim than this: "Now I am first minister." He no longer had to dread the moral lectures and the parsimony of his former preceptor. He was master!

However, he did not abandon his economical habit all at once, and Madame de la Tournelle had much difficulty at first in squeezing money out of him. "It must be confessed," wrote the Duc de Luynes, in April, 1743, "that the present arrangement but slightly resembles the announcements that were made when Madame de la Tournelle's favor began. She refused to come to terms, it was said, unless she was assured that she should have a house of her own, a sufficient allowance to enable her to entertain handsomely, and a carriage of her own to drive about in, as she did not care to use the king's carriages. To be sure, she does not use his, but she has none of her own; and so she never goes out, fond as she is of the theatre." She finally succeeded in relaxing her lover's parsimonious instincts. In October, 1743, he gave her an excellent cook, and an equerry, a berlin, six carriage horses, and last, but by no means least, the title of Duchesse de Châteauroux, with an estate which yielded a yearly income of 85,000 livres. The letters-patent were conceived in these terms:—

"The right of bestowing titles of honor and dignity being one of the highest attributes of supreme power, our royal predecessors have handed down to us divers memorials of the use they have made of this right in favor of those persons whose virtues and merit they wished to perpetuate.

Whereas our very dear and beloved cousin, Marie-Anne de Mailly, widow of the Marquis de la Tournelle, is descended from one of the most illustrious families of our realm, which is allied to our own and the most venerable houses of Europe; and whereas her ancestors have rendered during several centuries very great and important service to our crown; and whereas she is attached to the person of the queen, our cherished consort, as lady-in-waiting, and has, over and above these recommendations, all the virtues, and those most estimable qualities of mind and heart which have gained for her the just regard and esteem of all, — we have deemed it proper to bestow upon her the Duchy of Châteauroux, in the province of Berry, with all its appurtenances and dependencies."

Parliament was called together to register this document. "The worshipful company," says the Marquis d'Argenson, "listened with becoming gravity to the flowers of rhetoric which the monarch showered upon his mistress, and voted to register the letters." Barbier, the faithful echo of the public opinion of the day, makes the following observations on this subject in his journal; they are not altogether free from a suspicion of malice. "These letters-patent," he says, "are very complimentary to the Mailly family. The king declares that it is one of the most illustrious and noble houses in the kingdom, allied to his own and the most venerable ones in Europe. The reflection at once forces itself upon us that it is an astonishing fact that the male members of this family have not been honored with the title of Duc,

and that the acknowledgment of its merits begins on the female side. One might find something to criticise in the preamble to the letters. Considering the present state of things, the author was not very judicious; it would have been as well to dispense with shouting from the house-tops what has already made scandal enough."

Behold Madame de la Tournelle become Duchesse de Châteauroux! She was formally presented to the queen upon her elevation, and was graciously received by her. "Madame, I congratulate you upon the honor which the king has accorded you." The Duc de Richelieu's zeal was rewarded by the position of first gentleman of the chamber. The new duchess was fairly enthroned at Versailles. She had with her two of her sisters, — Madame de Flavacourt, who was, like herself, lady-in-waiting, and the Duchesse de Lauraguais, who became her inseparable companion. Neither of the two possessed sufficient attractions to arouse her jealousy, and she used them as faithful allies. Louis pitched his tent in the society of these three ladies, who joined their forces to keep him under the yoke. He amused himself by nicknaming them. He called Madame de Flavacourt "the Chicken" (*la Poule*), because of her shyness, and the Duchesse de Lauraguais "*La Rue des Mauvaises-Paroles*," because of her sharp tongue.

Can we expect any great or noble results from such a coterie as that? Is it true, as we are told by MM. de Goncourt, that "Madame de Châteauroux possessed the energy and virile ambition of a Longueville in conjunction with the

pride and ardor of a Montespan"? Is it true that in her pride and the feverish impatience of her will, there raged the fire "to kindle a Fronde, as well as to be the life and soul of a great reign"? We cannot think so. We must take with a great deal of allowance these exaggerated fables which represent the mistresses of kings as urging their lovers on to deeds of lofty chivalry. If we may judge from the Mémoires of the Duc de Luynes, most impartial and painstaking of narrators, the Duchesse de Châteauroux was in no sense a woman of affairs, and still less was she a heroine. He pictures her to us torpid, slothful, taciturn, and bored. "She and her sister," he says, "pass the day in easy-chairs, and when Madame de Lauraguais is not on duty at the palace she frequently does not leave her bed until eight or nine o'clock at night. The king is with the two sisters as often as he can arrange it, and it does n't appear that the three ever converse on matters of the least importance. Madame de Mailly would not have been so indifferent."

Meanwhile France had been at war with Austria since 1741, and with England since 1742,* and it was a matter of general wonder that Louis XV., then in the very prime of life, had not yet taken his place at the head of his troops. We must do him the justice to say that he was personally brave, and had, in common with his ancestors, a deep respect for warlike prowess. He understood that longer inaction on his part would be inexcusable, and that his place was with his army. Maréchal de Noailles, whom he had chosen for

* War of the Austrian Succession. — *Note by Translator.*

confidential adviser, at last persuaded him to make his first campaign. But it was no easy matter. For more than a year Louis wavered; and the dread of leaving his mistress for a few days was by no means the least of his perplexities. The marshal tried to appeal to his master's pride of birth. "France," he wrote, "has never known a reign attended with happiness among the people, or with real glory for the monarch, except those in which they have held the reigns of government in their own hands. A king is never so great as at the head of his army." Louis, on his side, wrote to the marshal, on the 24th of July, 1743: "I can promise you that I have a very earnest desire to become familiar with a profession in which my ancestors have won such renown." And again, on the 9th of August: "If my country is to be devoured, it will be very hard for me to look on at the process without doing my utmost with my own hand to prevent it."

At one time it was believed that the king was really about to start; but the Duchesse de Châteauroux was very anxious to follow him. So far was she from comprehending how ridiculous a thing it would be for a troop of fine ladies to invade the camp, that she did her best to induce her friend, Maréchal de Noailles, to look with favor upon the extraordinary plan she had so much at heart. In a letter of the 3d of September, 1743, she said: "I agree that the king should join the army; he has not a moment to lose, and should act very promptly. But what will become of me? Will it be impossible for my sister and myself to follow him, and at least, if we cannot go into

camp with him, remain near at hand so as to hear from him every day? I think I ought to say to you that I have asked the king's leave to write you upon these matters, and have done it with his sanction."

Clearly Louis XV. did not wish to take the field without his mistress. The Maréchal de Noailles, however, had the courage to reply frankly: "I do not think, Madame, that you should be allowed to follow the king with Madame your sister. You acknowledge the impropriety yourself, in changing your request to one that you may be allowed to go to some town near by, where you can hear from his Majesty every day. I cannot refrain from saying to you that you ought, for the king's sake and your own, to have some very convincing reason to give, to justify in the eyes of the public the step you are contemplating."

The result of this letter was to postpone the gratification of the monarch's aspirations for military renown. He abandoned the idea of making the fall campaign of 1743, and did not take his departure until the following spring, May 2, 1744.

IX.

THE METZ EXPEDITION.

AT last Louis XV. was at the head of his troops. As soon as he appeared on the northern frontier there was a tremendous outburst of enthusiasm. He was then thirty-four, had a fine presence, and his bearing was both gracious and dignified. He rode exceedingly well, and made a fine appearance at the head of his battalions. He was present at the siege of Menin, and there was no dearth of encomiums upon his conduct. He rode through the trenches, visited the hospitals, tasted the soup furnished to the wounded, and the soldiers' bread. Every one cried: "There's a true soldier for you! He is the father of his troops! He is every inch a king!"

He had with him his chaplain, Mgr. de Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons, to administer the sacrament in case of need, and his confessor, Père Pérusseau, to give him absolution if his life should be in danger.

There were no women at the camp. The Duchesses de Châteauroux and de Lauraguais, showed themselves at the opera, to prove that they had not followed the king. Everything was going on finely, and without the least opening for scandal.

On the 4th of June Menin opened its gates. There was a great display of fireworks at the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, in honor of the victory, and *Te Deums* were sung in all the churches in France. Joy and confidence were unbounded.

But soon a black speck appeared in this cloudless sky. In camp, as at Versailles, Louis was pursued by ennui. *Post equitem sedet atra cura.* He sighed for Madame de Châteauroux, for he much preferred the frivolous chatter of a bevy of fair dames to the dry reports of his general officers. And the favorite too was ill at ease, for she fancied that the lover might be lost to sight in the soldier, and she was apprehensive as to her own situation. "Upon my word, dear uncle," she wrote to Richelieu, on the 3d of June, "I am hardly suited for so much anxiety, and from time to time I get terribly despondent. It was so entirely foreign to my character, that I must have been mad to have put my foot in such a mess as this. However, it is done, and I must be patient; I am convinced that everything will turn out as I wish."

Madame de Châteauroux was determined to join the king. But how should she go to work? There was not a single lady in camp. If she should be the first to make her appearance there, the scandal would be altogether too great. A princess of the blood, the Duchesse de Chartres, set the example which she wanted; she set out for the army on the pretext that her husband had had a fall from his horse. Immediately after, Mesdames de Châteauroux and de Lau-

raguais followed in her wake. On the 6th of June they had the audacity to go and take leave of the queen, who carried her forbearance so far as to invite them both to sup with her.

"One cannot sufficiently applaud all the courteous attention which she pays to all who come to pay their court to her, men or women," says the Duc de Luynes, after narrating this incident.

On the next night but one the two duchesses left Versailles. The king met them at Lille, and then went to besiege Ypres. Madame de Châteauroux carried her infatuation so far as to claim the credit for the success of this siege. "You know," she wrote to Richelieu from Lille, on the 25th of June, "how prone I am to look at the bright side of things, and how firmly I believe that my lucky star, of which I am so proud, influences my whole life. It serves us in the place of able generals and ministers. He has never done a wiser thing than in submitting himself to its direction." From this it is easy to see that Madame de Châteauroux looked upon herself as the arbiter of the king's destiny.

A melancholy fact, because it so truly illustrates the demoralization of the time, is that the Marquis d'Argenson saw nothing improper or unnatural in this shameful and scandalous proceeding. Under date of the 30th of June, 1744, he wrote in his "Mémoires:" "The king has begun to show himself at the head of his army. It is not to be denied that this is a judicious step. Some people claim

that it is a stain upon his good name to have had his mistress join him in camp, and discreditable to the princesses and great ladies in whose company she went thither. It seems that prejudice must have had much to do with that criticism. Why, in Heaven's name, should he deny himself a pleasure which injures no one? The Flemings are superstitious. They have been told that the king has had affairs with the three sisters, and they were scandalized when these two arrived at Lille. Two hours later the barracks took fire, and they said that it was caused by the flaming wrath of the Almighty."

Barbier is not quite so indulgent, but he pleads extenuating circumstances. "The public," he says, "do not approve of this expedition. Yet, to tell the truth, an air of decency is thrown over the business by the presence of three princesses of the blood, and a number of other ladies, all of whom are supposed to have gone as escort to the Duchesse de Chartres, who had a valid excuse for joining the army."

The people, who have the true instinct of right and wrong, were more just and more severe. They were very angry. The soldiers fairly pelted the two duchesses with satirical allusions. They pitied the queen, and detested the favorite.

Meanwhile Alsace was invaded, and Louis XV. took up his quarters at Metz; but he carried his female contingent along, like an Asiatic monarch. On the way Madame de Châteauroux was taken sick at Reims. The king thought

she was as good as dead, and busied himself making up his mind where she should be buried, and what sort of a mausoleum he would build for her. But it was only a false alarm. She recovered almost immediately and rejoined the king at Metz. There she and her sister were installed in the Abbey of Saint-Arnould, and a long wooden gallery was built to connect the Abbey with the palace where Louis was quartered. By this proceeding, four streets were blocked up. The inhabitants grumbled. To quiet them, an attempt was made to make them believe that the wooden gallery had no other prupose than to make it more convenient for the king to attend mass at the Abbey.

Suddenly a sinister rumor was circulated. During the day of the 4th of August the king was taken sick. His life was in danger. He himself believed that he had but a short time in which to prepare to appear before his Maker. All his religious sentiments were awakened. He was anxious to confess, but, before he could do that, separation from Madame de Châteauroux was indispensable; and Louis, always feeble of will, had not as yet courage to bid her go. He postponed his confession on the pretext that he needed some time to remember all his sins. His mistress came to his bedside, and he made a motion as if to kiss her hand, but changed his mind, and said: "Ah! princess, I fear I am doing wrong; we may perhaps have to part."

Madame de Châteauroux tried to come to terms with the Jesuit Pérusseau. She implored him not to let them drive her away. She swore that she would never again

be the king's mistress, but only his friend. The Jesuit was not to be moved, however.

Bishop Fitz-James bore himself like an inspired apostle; he told the king, bluntly: "Sire, the laws of the Church and our sacred canons forbid us to bring the viaticum to one whose concubine is still within the walls of the town. I beg your Majesty to give orders anew for her departure, for there is no time to lose; your Majesty has but a few short hours to live."

Louis wavered no longer; the libertine vanished, leaving only the devotee. "I first partook of the sacrament twenty-two years ago," said he; "I hope to do my duty in that regard satisfactorily now, and for the last time. Ah! how unworthily I have worn my crown unto this very day! What a fearful reckoning must a king make with his God when he appears before His judgment-seat!"

Louis received the sacrament of extreme unction. Bishop Fitz-James who administered it, turned to those who stood by, and spoke as follows: "Messieurs the princes of the blood, and you, great nobles of the realm, the king charges us, Mgr. the Bishop of Metz and myself, to make known to you his sincere repentance for the scandal he has caused by living, as he has done, with Madame de Châteauroux. He has learned that she is still only three leagues from here, and he now commands her not to come within fifty leagues of the court. His Majesty has taken her position at court from her."

"And her sister's, too," added the king.

Does it seem possible that the dignified, Christian-like conduct of Bishop Fitz-James found its detractors? Barbier wrote in his journal: "The action of Mgr. the Bishop of Soissons is looked upon here as the grandest thing that ever was. The public often applauds the greatest events without sufficient reflection. For my own part, I take the liberty of regarding his action as extremely indelicate, and this public reparation as a public scandal. We should respect a king's reputation, and let him die with proper religious ceremonies, but with some dignity and majesty as well. What is the use of all this parade of ecclesiastical mummery? It was enough that the king should be sincere in his repentance for what he had done, without exhibiting it to the world."

All France was in a state of most intense excitement. The report was industriously circulated that Louis's illness was caused by the fatigue incident upon the invasion of Alsace. On all sides were heard loud encomiums of his goodness of heart, his penitence, his courage, and his patriotism. Masses were said for him in all the churches throughout the kingdom. Priests read from the pulpit the bulletins from Metz, and the story of the monarch's praiseworthy apology to his subjects. Every one spoke of him with tears of emotion, and admiration. But the luckless favorite, the *Dame en roux*, as the people called her, was overwhelmed with curses and reviling. The queen was sent for to go to Metz. She left Versailles the 15th of August, amid general excitement. When she reached her husband's

side he received her with demonstrations of deep affection. He kissed her, and asked her pardon for all the suffering he had caused her.

The next morning at four o'clock Louis sent a servant to arouse Madame de Villars, whom he knew to be much in the queen's confidence, to ask if Marie Leczinska had really forgiven him. He uttered most exemplary and touching sentiments, asking God's permission to withdraw from the world, if his subjects would be more wisely governed by another.

A few days later he was convalescent. The queen was overjoyed. She believed that her husband had suddenly been transformed into a saint. But let us listen to the Duchesse de Brancas, an eye-witness of Marie's hopes, and her cruel awakening.

"The relics of the old court," she says, in an interesting fragment of Mémoires, "had little difficulty in persuading themselves that God, having visited his wrath upon the king, would touch his heart. The maid of honor was so fully convinced of it that one day, when the king was well on the road to recovery, she gave orders to make the queen's bed over into a nuptial couch, and to put two pillows on the bolster. You can imagine how vast were the hopes which were revealed by the joy of some courtiers and the amazement of others.

"The queen, since the king's convalescence began, had dressed herself with great care, in rose-colored gowns. The older ladies expressed their glad anticipations by

wearing green ribbons; in short, it was a long while since so much attention had been paid to the niceties of the toilet; the coquettishness of the old ladies expressed, without words, all that they desired to say, and there was a distinct reminiscent flavor of the gallant days of old.

"But you can also imagine the fiendish glee with which the Duc de Bouillon and the Duc de Richelieu informed the king of the preparations which were on foot in the queen's palace. He seemed so annoyed that these gentlemen thought he would not take it amiss if they warned these mothers of the Church that they were very foolish to rehearse a *Te Deum* which would never be sung, and that nothing in this world was more uncertain than the king's conversion. This was quite enough to make these ladies put off their finery again. Some of them put on more modest colors, others lowered their head-dresses, and others still used smaller quantities of rouge."

The Duc de Richelieu, the Mephistopheles of Louis XV., forecast the sequel rightly. When ill the king became a saint; when he recovered he became a rake again. The fear of being laughed at made him blush for that short moment of conversion to a more virtuous line of conduct. His professions of penitence seemed ridiculous to him. He nourished a grudge against his confessor and his chaplain, and all those who had given him good advice. The affection of his people, far from touching his heart, vexed him, because his devoted and faithful subjects had the audacity to refuse to bend the knee to the Duchesse de Châteauroux.

He was offended at the respectful warmth of feeling entertained for the queen, and almost came to look upon the priests who had prayed so earnestly for his recovery as enemies of his royal authority.

Poor Marie Leczinska's fond dream soon came to an end. As Louis was on the point of leaving Metz, she asked him, in fear and trembling, if he would not allow her to go with him to Saverne and Strasbourg. "It is not to be thought of for a moment," he replied coldly. The Queen in despair returned to Versailles; the heart which she thought she had won back had slipped from her grasp forever.

X.

DEATH OF THE DUCHESSE DE CHÂTEAUROUX.

MEANWHILE what had become of Madame de Châteauroux? How was she enduring her humiliation and disgrace? We left her at Metz, just at the time when, ignominiously hunted out of the town by the Bishop of Soissons, treated by the people like one accursed, and overwhelmed by the maledictions of the public conscience, she had with infinite difficulty succeeded in borrowing a carriage from the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, to take her back to Paris.

It was a melancholy flight. She avoided maltreatment at the hands of the people only by making long detours, passing through several villages on foot and unrecognized. And yet she did not lower her crest. From Bar-le-Duc she wrote to M. de Richelieu: "I suppose that while the king's health is feeble he will make a great show of religion; but the moment he is a little better, I will wager that my image will dance madly about in his brain, and that he will at last be unable to resist the desire to speak of me, and will very mildly ask Lebel and Bachelier what has become of me."

In the same letter the disconsolate favorite spoke of herself in terms of complacency which were very like self-admiration. "While the king lives," she said, "I must endure as patiently as I can all the tortures they choose to inflict upon me. If he recovers his health I shall be so much the closer to him, and he will owe me a public reparation, even more than he does now. If he dies I will stoop to no baseness, even though the kingdom of France were the stake to be played for. So far I have borne myself with dignity; I shall never deviate from that course, because it is the only means I have of making myself respected, of reconquering public favor, and of retaining the regard which I deserve."

Can we wonder at the self-delusion of some crowned heads, when a mere royal mistress wears so thick a bandage over her eyes?

After the fever comes prostration. At one time Madame de Châteauroux, intoxicated with pride and vindictiveness, imagined that she was destined once more to wield the sceptre of queen *de la main gauche*, which had just slipped from her grasp; again she cast a contemptuous glance upon the paltry drama of life, and spoke of abandoning it all. She wrote to Richelieu from Sainte-Ménehould on the 18th of August, 1744: "This whole business is horrible, and inspires in me intense disgust of this country where I have lived in spite of myself; and so far am I from longing to return to Versailles, as you believe, I am sure that even if I were asked to do so I could not make up my mind to it.

All that I want now is that the insult which was put upon me should be wiped out, and that my name shall not be dishonored. That, I assure you, is my whole ambition. Ah! mon Dieu, what does it all amount to? I give you my word that I am done with it all. I should be a great fool to have any inclination to embark on that sea again; and you know how little I was flattered and dazzled by all that grandeur, and that I should have had no part in it had I followed my own desires. But it is done, and I must take what comes and think no more about it."

Most edifying reflections, surely. But the favorite's philosophical resignation did not last much longer than the king's repentance. We read in the "Maxims" of La Rochefoucauld, that "the wit of most women serves to increase their folly rather than their common-sense."

The duchess was no sooner back at Paris than the flame of her ambition, her anger, and her hatred was kindled afresh. She wrote to the Duc de Richelieu: "You are quite right in saying that it would be a fine thing to have the 'Day of Dupes' over again; but we must have patience, — to be sure, we need a good stock of it. All the reports which have been written you about the current gossip at Paris are quite accurate; you would never dream how far it has gone; if you had appeared here at that moment you would have been torn to pieces. However, I tell you that we shall come out all right, and I know I am not mistaken. It will be a very pleasant moment, and you can easily believe that I wish it were here already."

We can see from this that her renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the wicked world was already a thing of the past. Still again she wrote to Richelieu on the 13th of September: "I hope that the king's sickness has not taken away his memory. 'Heretofore no one but myself has ever known his heart, and I can assure you that it is a kind, yes, a very kind one, and capable of deep feeling. I will not deny that there is something a little strange in it all, but it is of no importance. He may continue in his religious frame of mind, but he will never be a bigot; I love him a hundred times better for it; I will be his friend, and in that capacity I shall be unassailable. All that these rascals have accomplished during his illness will serve only to make my position happier and more stable. I shall no longer have to fear change of heart, or illness, or the devil, and we shall lead a life of pure delight. Adieu, dear uncle; take good care of yourself. For my own part I am going seriously to work to cultivate in myself the physical health of a porter, so as to keep my enemies in a rage as long as I can, and have time to destroy them; and they shall all be destroyed,— you may be sure of it."

All this was written in the midst of intense moral and physical suffering, convulsions, hysteria, and heart-rending anxiety and agony. Madame de Châteauroux was a perfect type of the impulsive, passionate woman, alternating between ecstasy and prostration, pride and humility, madness and clear-sightedness, ardor and discouragement, delusion and disillusion. Nothing could be more depressing than

this correspondence, which is the laying bare of a soul. One has not the heart to be indignant with confessions so frank in their immorality. That such a scandalous state of things should be possible, the whole age must have been corrupt to the core. Our indictment should be directed against an epoch, not against a woman.

Madame de Châteauroux well understood Louis's character. She knew beforehand that he would soon come back to her. And, in truth, the king had only one thought, — to bring about a reconciliation with his mistress. Camp life was intolerable to him. He consented to look on at the siege of Fribourg, but that city had so sooner surrendered than he hurried back to Paris. He made his entry in solemn form on the 13th of November, 1744, at six in the evening, riding in one of the coronation carriages. Triumphal arches had been erected with the inscription, LUDOVICO REDIVIVO ET TRIUMPHATORI. The houses were covered to the roofs with acclaiming thousands.

The monarch alighted at the Tuileries, where the carriage-way was lined by a double row of great nobles awaiting him. The next day he went to Notre Dame with all the royal family to render thanks to God.

Madame de Châteauroux was in the midst of the crowd. That evening she wrote to Richelieu: "I have seen him; his expression was joyous, and yet he seemed deeply moved; so that he must be capable of an affectionate sentiment. Only one voice in my vicinity reminded me of my misfortunes by calling me by an insulting name."

As he left the cathedral, it was not of his glory, or his people, or his God that Louis was thinking. Madame de Châteauroux was still the sole object of his thoughts. She had apartments in Rue du Bac, very near the Tuileries. That night, when everything was quiet about the palace, he crossed the Pont-Royal, and made his way unattended to the favorite's house, like a culprit suing for forgiveness of his sins.

Madame de Châteauroux received him with much dignity, and laid down certain hard and fast conditions, on which alone she would give him absolution. Louis made no difficulty about anything except the dismissal of Maurepas, an obliging and agreeable minister, whom the Duchesse de Châteauroux detested, but who made a joke of business, and had the art of making the transaction of affairs a diversion.

The next day the king went to Versailles, and it was very soon whispered abroad that Mesdames de Châteauroux and de Lauraguais were about to reappear at court in triumph. Then the voice of the people, like *Chorus* in the old Greek tragedies, was again lifted up in maledictions.

"If the king takes up with her again," cried the market-women, "there will be no more *Paters* said for him on the streets of Paris."

The cautious Duc de Luynes was rather more guarded in his language. Apropos of the report of her restoration to favor, he said: "It has been talked about almost in public all over Paris; and even Versailles, where there is usually

so little talk, has not been entirely free from gossip on this subject. However, as such comments only succeed in making trouble, and serve no possible good purpose, the most discreet persons have held their tongues."

The thing was done, the preliminaries agreed upon. There was a bargain between the king and his mistress, by the terms of which Maurepas was not to leave the ministry, but was condemned to be the bearer of the king's apologies and the invitation to return to Versailles, to Madame de Châteauroux, Rue du Bac. The minister acquitted himself of this commission on the 25th of November. The duchess, who was sick in bed, replied that she would obey the king's commands as soon as she was able to be about again. That evening she wrote to the Duchesse de Boufflers: "I value your friendship too highly to leave you in the dark for a moment as to my concerns. The king has sent word to me, by M. de Maurepas, that he was very indignant at all that took place at Metz, and at the indecent harshness of the treatment I received; that he begs me to overlook it; and that he hopes, in proof of my forgiveness, that my sister and I will take possession of our former apartments at Versailles; that he will give us ample proof of his protection, his esteem, and his affection on every occasion that offers; and that he will reinstate us in our positions at court."

So much excitement had worn out Madame de Châteauroux. Her joy at the turn things had taken brightened her up at times, but the end had come, and she was fated

never again to see that palace of Versailles, nor the king whose passion had borne such fatal fruit for her. She never left her bed again. A raging fever consumed her, she believed that she had been poisoned, and she suffered horrible torture, mental and physical. Even her bitterest enemies must have taken pity on her. Her agony lasted eleven days. She was wildly delirious, and her frame was racked by frequent convulsions, while she struggled valiantly against death, with all the vigor of her youth, and all her proud, indomitable spirit. Louis, notwithstanding his pretended passion for her, did not even take the trouble to go and bid her farewell. Indeed, he did not send directly to inquire for her. Madame de Lauraguais, being ill at the time, was not at her sister's bedside; she died, alone and unattended, on the 8th of December, 1744. The king abandoned her, but Jesus Christ did not. At the eleventh hour she repented of her sins, like Mary Magdalene, and for the first time in many months this suffering sinner felt at peace.

"Père Ségaud attended her," says the Duc de Luynes. "As he spoke to her of the confidence we should have in the Holy Virgin, she replied that she had always worn a little medallion of the Virgin; that she had implored her intercession to procure two boons: one was that she might not die without receiving the sacrament; and the other, that she might breathe her last upon one of the days consecrated to her. The first had already been granted, and she soon obtained the second as well, for she died on the feast of the Conception."

Louis XV. was stunned at first. The queen herself, the queen, who practised the Christian virtue of forgiveness on such a vast scale, entered heartily into her husband's grief. She passed the evening alone, although it had been appointed for a gathering of a few of her chosen friends in the apartments of the Duchesse de Luynes. In the night she awoke in a fright, and called one of her ladies. "Mon Dieu!" she cried, "that poor duchess! If she should come back! I thought I saw her."

"Oh, well, Madame," replied her maid, "if she should come back, her first visit would not be to your Majesty."

Barbier, in his journal, bestows his compassion, incredible as it seems, not upon Madame de Châteauroux, but upon Louis! "Sensible people," he says, "praise his deep feeling, which demonstrates his kindly disposition; but they fear for his health. The common people are rather rejoiced than otherwise at this death; they would be glad to have the king unfeelingly select a successor from their number to-morrow." And the Marquis d'Argenson wrote thus to the Duc de Richelieu: "Our poor master's countenance is enough to make one tremble for his life." But D'Argenson had no occasion for alarm. Louis's character was too weak to be capable of sorrow for a long time. His emotions were easily aroused, but very transitory. There was only one unchangeable element in his character, — ennui. He belonged to the very numerous race of egotists. There are those whose tears flow easily and freely, but who are quickly consoled.

The master changed his previous habits very slightly, if at all. After a few days the name of the Duchesse de Châteauroux was no longer heard. She was doomed to be sincerely mourned by but one person in the world, and that one the sister whom she had treated with such pitiless cruelty, — Madame de Mailly.

Nothing is left, after this narration, save a feeling of melancholy and depression. For what has been the fate of these three sisters upon whom the master's choice fell? One of their number, the Comtesse (Marquise) de Vintimille, died in childbed at twenty-eight, and her death was thus the direct consequence and chastisement of her sin. Another, the Duchesse de Châteauroux, said farewell to the world at twenty-seven, the victim of bitter humiliation and excessive suffering. Her period of favor, like Madame de Vintimille's, lasted only two years. The third, the Comtesse de Mailly, was more mercifully dealt with by Providence, because she had, at least, time to repent; she lived to be forty years of age. But her last years were one long self-sacrifice. She covered her head with ashes, clothed herself in sackcloth, and when some rude passer-by, seeing her on her way to church, called her by an insulting name, she said: —

"Do you recognize me? Well, then, in God's name, pray for me."

How vain and transitory are the pleasures of courts! How pitiable their orgies and debauchery! How dearly one must pay for those fleeting moments of spurious enjoy-

ment and false pride! Ah! I can understand how disgusted Louis must have been with others as well as himself. I understand his backsliding, his discouragement and remorse, and I cannot wonder that, in spite of the clinking glasses, the glare of lights, and the sweet odor of flowers, the boudoirs of Versailles sometimes were like tombs.

PART SECOND.

1745–1768.

I.

LOUIS XV. AND THE ROYAL FAMILY IN 1745.

THE tragic end of the Duchesse de Châteauroux might well have given birth to serious thoughts in the brain of Louis XV. But such was not the case. A few weeks passed, and a new favorite was installed in the apartments left vacant by the deceased.

But before we begin the story of the long reign of the Marquise de Pompadour, let us cast a glance or two upon the domestic life of the royal family at the beginning of the favor of that woman, who was more of a minister in petticoats than a mistress, and who, unhappily, typifies her whole generation.

In 1745 Louis XV. was thirty-five years old. From a physical standpoint, he was a model sovereign. An expression of gracious nobility, and majesty tempered with mildness characterized his handsome features. A noble and expressive countenance, great blue eyes, deep set and eloquent in their gaze, an aquiline nose, a truly regal carriage of the head, a most dignified bearing without the slightest suspicion

gifts with which nature had endowed him; it weakened and emasculated and annihilated his will-power, and stifled the voice of his conscience as it did his kingly instincts. Ennui was the familiar demon of his sluggish existence, his dull and gloomy hours. And thus it is that the story of a king's intrigues becomes simply the story of a man bored to distraction."

The De Luynes "Mémoires" afford the fullest confirmation of this estimate. "The king's disposition," it is there said, "is neither bright nor joyous; indeed there is a good deal of the splenetic in his composition. Details of diseases and operations, often mingled with anatomical discussions and questions as to where his companions expect to be buried, are, sad to say, his ordinary subjects of conversation." "Where would you prefer to be buried?" he asked M. de Souvré one day. "At your Majesty's feet," replied the courtier, who was noted for saying whatever he thought. Louis at once became very thoughtful, because the reply reminded him that kings are not immortal. Do not the weighty words of Pascal apply with wonderful force to this Louis XV.? —

"One does not need a very keen intellect to understand that there is no real, substantial happiness here on earth, that all our pleasures are but vanity, and our misfortunes never-ending, and that death, which threatens us at every turn, is certain within a few years, it may be within a few days, to remove us to another sphere of everlasting happiness or misery, or annihilation Between us and heaven, or hell,

or nothingness, there is only this earthly life, the least substantial of all things; and since there surely can be no heaven for those who doubt the immortality of their souls, they must expect either hell or nothingness. There is nothing more certain than that, nothing more appalling. No matter how great our courage; such is the end reserved for the most lovely of earthly lives."

There lies the secret of the king's inexorable despondency. Like all men who are only half-religious, religion held for him only terror — no consolation. The feasts of the Church were no longer occasions of joy and gladness to him, but of bitter suffering.

His kingly faith was of much the same quality as his religious faith; it disturbed more than it comforted him. He felt that he was not worthy to be one of the Lord's anointed. His kingly conscience was as troublesome to him as his Christian conscience. He had no esteem for himself nor for those by whom he was surrounded.

He would freely have agreed with his minister for Foreign Affairs, the Marquis d'Argenson, that devoted royalist who talks like a republican: "Crowded and magnificent courts, the bait of fools and villains, will never make royalty glorious. It is always possible to make sufficient display without overstepping the bounds of decency. Would that mankind might come to see that the very greatest weakness of monarchical governments is what is called the court. Beginning with the monarch himself, it is to that source that we must look for the origin of all

the vices; and from thence they spread out in all directions, as if from the box of Pandora."

But we do not mean to exaggerate, nor rely upon forced comparisons. We must remember that republican courts — for democrats in power have their courtiers as well as kings — are no more strict nor more moral than those of kings and emperors.

It behooves us always to remember that there is a real difference between the conception of royalty of Louis XIV. and that of Louis XV. The former fulfilled the duties of his position with the ease of a great actor in a favorite rôle, or, we might better say, with the dignity of a priest exercising the functions of his calling. Louis XV., on the other hand, despite his commanding presence, and the auspicious beginning of his reign, was almost ashamed of his kingly dignity. He cared nothing for what was truly great; the essential needs of his existence were the *petits appartements*, the select supper-parties, and familiar conversation. There were times when the monarch was no longer even a simple gentleman, but became a bourgeois, regulating his own household accounts, busying himself about petty details of expenditure, haggling with his servants, and leading a futile, vulgar existence. He was not the man to select the proud device of the Sun-King, *Nec pluribus impar*. The rays of the star of royalty blinded his eyes. He found his delight, not in the magnificent glittering gallery of mirrors, but in the dainty little nests, cosey retreats amid the green trees, — Choisy, for instance, where the Duc de Luynes tells us that

he was almost like a private gentleman doing the honors of his country-house.

But we must not forget, either, that Louis XV. had his seasons of far-reaching aspiration, and of dreams of glory and power. He was not the *roi fainéant* described by ill-informed historians. His military instinct was sometimes stirred to life, and his pride of birth awoke.

"The king, in the midst of his soldiers, with their taking uniforms of white, blue, and yellow, his hat perched jauntily upon one ear, white-gloved, with a shoulder-knot on his coat, is enough to inspire joyous thoughts, and fine tales of gallantry. My gentleman goes into battle in ruffles, powdered *à la maréchale*, and with scented water on his fine lace handkerchief; for elegant raiment never interfered with courage, and refinement and personal gallantry go very well together." *

The year 1745 was a glorious year, the year of one of our greatest victories, — Fontenoy. Louis and the dauphin bore themselves on that great day like true descendants of Henri of Navarre. Voltaire's enthusiasm in singing pæans for that glorious day was not made to order, and the advocate Barbier in perfect good faith cried that the reign of Louis XV. was the most memorable of all the reigns in the history of France.

We must no longer believe that this king, over-praised by his contemporaries, but too much cried down by history, was so slothful as he has been painted. On the contrary,

* M. Capefigue, Mme. la Marquise de Pompadour. 1 vol. Amyot.

he devoted a good deal of time and energy to the transaction of affairs. Not only was he very regular in presiding over the Council of Ministers, but he devoted himself particularly to military and diplomatic matters. If he yielded readily to the proposals of his ministers, without giving himself the trouble to controvert their views, it was because he was himself guiding all the threads of a secret, back-stairs policy, entirely distinct from the official policy of his ministers.* His intentions were good, and he was sincerely attached to France. To what, then, is his wretched failure to be attributed? To two failings, which are almost always found in the same person: licentiousness and irresolution.

Debauchery is enfeebling and enervating; the man who has fallen into its toils can neither act nor will. He sinks into that condition of baleful complacency, of meaningless good-nature, of failure of character and energy, of inconsequence and wavering, which deprives crowned heads, no less than private individuals, of all conception of uprightness and honor, and of the courage to form beneficent resolutions. In the companionship of his mistresses Louis lost the force to be a wise and just king.

Distrust and shyness were the foundation stones of his character. "He knows that he is badly served," says M. Boutaric. "Being the absolute master, he has only to speak to be obeyed, and strong in the approval of his conscience, he might put things in order; but he is so shy, let us say

* M. Boutaric, Correspondance Secrète de Louis XV. Also, Le Secret du Roi, by De Broglie.

it frankly, so *cowardly*, that after having prayerfully sought the right way, and having fought it out with his own conscience, he almost always decides, regretfully it may be, upon the evil course which is proposed to him by his ministers or his mistresses. It is matter of common knowledge that when the king expresses an opinion in the council it is always disputed; and that the prince always ends, after a show of objection, by adopting the ideas of his advisers, although he knows very well that they are wrong, saying to himself, beneath his breath, 'So much the worse, they would have it so.' Thus he justifies the lines of Horace:*

'. . . video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor.'"

There were times when, as Duclos puts it, he seemed to look upon himself as a prince of the blood in disgrace, and without power or influence at court. One day the queen complained to him of the rebuff she had received from some minister in reply to some request. "Why do you not do as I do?" said he; "I never ask those people for anything."

Despite his absolute power, he always thought fit to resort to petty subterfuges and underhand manœuvres. In the words of a man who saw him every day, and knew him thoroughly, Le Roy, the *lieutenant des chasses*, he considered the power of dissimulation as the most necessary quality for a sovereign to possess. "His hobby," says the Marquis d'Argenson, "is to keep his real thoughts to

* Ovid; but we translate. — *Note by Translator.*

himself." He had another failing, which consisted in an obstinate conviction that the most upright and honorable men were, as a rule, dolts. Hence the large number of unsavory characters to whom he entrusted the most important offices. Acting upon such a system he never knew his own mind, and fell into the habit of fluctuating between one policy and another, and continually shifting his ground, — the surest proof of weakness. He wavered between peace and war, between the Prussian and Austrian alliance, between the friends and foes of the Parliament of Paris, between Jesuits and Jansenists. He held the *philosophes* in holy horror, and yet he appointed Voltaire a gentleman of the chamber, and lodged Quesnay in an entresol of the palace of Versailles. He sincerely believed in the truth of the Roman Catholic religion, and yet he took for his mistress and adviser, and general mentor, the close friend of the Encyclopedists. He was by conviction, and on principle, essentially conservative, and yet he was the immediate precursor of the Revolution.

"Oh, how fitly does the term 'weakness' portray the passions of certain men who are endowed with a kind heart and easy temper!" cries D'Argenson. "They see and approve the better way, and follow every evil impulse. Their manhood is only a continuation of infancy. They often mistake pleasure's shadow for pleasure itself. Callow and childish, conceited without proper pride, their attempts at firmness are naught but obstinacy and impertinence. A prince cursed with such a disposition fancies that he is

governing wisely and well when he is not governing at all. Everything conspires to deceive him, and he is his own worst enemy. He has favorites for whom he has no affection, and absolute ministers in whom he has no confidence. He is the embodiment of all the faults which foreigners attribute to the French nation; everywhere contrast, the result of an imagination which is too fickle and too much in control of the judgment; wasted talents, good impulses which cannot be properly guided, punctiliousness in trifles, instability and lack of energy in affairs of moment; memory without remembrance; patience and tranquillity, mystery and thoughtlessness, eagerness for new forms of dissipation, disgust and ennui, flashes of feeling, followed by absolute apathy — in fine, a kind master, but lacking in the elements of humanity."

Having thus drawn the portrait of Louis XV., D'Argenson goes on to speak of the queen: "Her courtesy makes her somewhat attractive, but she repels many by making her friendship too common. Since the king has had regularly constituted mistresses, she has become a sort of rallying-point for those who deplore the scandal; they flock to her in order to displease the king and the favorite. Their murmurs are carefully porportioned to the royal patience."

In 1745 Marie Leczinska, seven years the king's senior, was in her forty-second year. When she brought into the world (July 15, 1737) her tenth child, Madame Louise, who afterwards became a Carmelite nun, some one asked the king, who had six children then living, if the little new-

comer should be called Madame *Septième* (seventh). He retorted dryly, "Madame *Dernière*" (last).

From that time on he utterly neglected the queen. He treated her with frigid courtesy, but kept her always at a distance, and never spoke to her except when others were present. He no longer gave her New Year's presents; there was not the least intimacy or freedom of intercourse between them. The short visits which he paid her every day were simply ceremonious visits, made in conformity to the etiquette of the court. The queen took her meals alone. Between her apartments and those of the king there was a barrier which she never crossed. The *vie intime* and the supper-parties in the cabinets were not for her. Separated from each other by the Salon de la Paix, the Galerie des Glaces, and the Salle du Conseil, the husband and wife led entirely distinct lives.

Alone did Marie Leczinska maintain, at Versailles, a solemn reproduction of the court of the "Great King," — not from any feeling of pride, but from respect for the principle involved. At eleven in the morning she had already heard one mass, seen the king for a moment, and received her children and those persons who had what was called the *petite entrée.* At noon came her formal toilet, and with it those who had the *grande entrée.* At one o'clock she heard mass for the second time, with all the court. At two she dined in public,* attended by her maid of honor and

* Her dinner was served in the room called "Antichambre de la reine," No. 117 of the "Notice du Musée," etc.

four ladies in full dress. A low railing separated her from the crowd of sight-seers, who were always anxious to be present at this function, and gaze upon the features of a queen justly held in such high esteem. In the evening, about six, she would take a hand at a game of *loto à la mode* or *cavagnole*. When the king was present she never sat without his permission, and they rarely exchanged more than a few monosyllables.

At ten o'clock the queen withdrew, and partook of supper, after which meal she saw only a very few of her most particular friends: the Duc and Duchesse de Luynes, Mesdames de Villars and de Chevreuse, Maurepas, Cardinals de Tencin and de Luynes, Président Hénault, Moncrif, and sometimes old Fontenelle. Sunday was the day set apart for ladies to be presented to her, and for those entitled to *tabourets* to be inducted into that right.* These ceremonies took place in the room called the "Salon de la reine," † adjoining her bedroom. Her seat was placed at the end of the room, upon a platform and beneath a canopy. "By a kind word or two, an inclination of the head, a glance, or a smile, Marie Leczinska would give courage to the lady who was presented, — whose embarrassment soon changed to grateful self-confidence when the queen made her one of those gracious little speeches which remain graven on the heart." ‡

* The *tabouret* was the right to remain seated in the queen's presence. It belonged of right to princesses and duchesses. — *Note by Translator.*

† No. 116 of the "Notice du Musée de Versailles."

‡ La Reine Marie Leczinska, by Madame la Comtesse d'Armaillé. 1 vol. Dedier.

But, after all, forsaken as she was by her spouse, the queen was happier than he, because she possessed the priceless, supreme comfort which he had not, — peace of mind. "What a contrast," said a great preacher, "between the bitter remorse of one's conscience, the viper which preys upon us without respite, the despondency of the criminal which undermines our strength and wastes our energy, the burden of conscious wrong-doing which overwhelms us, the hidden blade which pierces our soul, and which we know not how to pluck out, — what a contrast between the remorse of the guilty conscience and the soothing melancholy of the true repentance which brings salvation!" *

That phrase, "soothing melancholy," well describes the queen's condition. She undoubtedly suffered bitterly to see Louis's swift descent into the slough of vice. But instead of reproaching him, she carried her suffering to God. Gentle and resigned victim, she found ineffable comfort at the foot of the altar. Instead of revenging herself upon the king by recrimination and harsh words, she prayed for him. Her tranquil resignation, her charity, her Christian virtues, her charming affability made her the recipient of universal veneration. People had no other name for her than "the good queen."

The dauphin † was no less highly esteemed than his mother. In 1745 he was sixteen years old, — a devout, well-

* Massillon, Sermon sur les dégoûts qui accompagnent la piété.

† Born at Versailles September 4, 1729. Died at Fontainebleau December 20, 1765. Married in 1745 to a Spanish infante, and in 1747 to a princess of Saxony, mother of Louis XVI., Louis XVIII., and Charles X.

informed, well-meaning young man. He was a very faithful student. His favorite authors were Plato, Cicero, Tacitus, Lucretius, Horace, Virgil, and Juvenal. He knew by heart the finest passages in the writings of the philosophers and poets of antiquity. It was for him that the magnificent Louvre edition of the classics — *ad usum Delphini* — was printed; one of the most elegant examples of contemporary book-making.

With the deepest respect for his father he never addressed him except with the most profound submission. "A dauphin," he used to say, "should use one half of his thoughts to conceal the other half." Louis XV. was very jealous, and it would not do to clash with him.

On the 23d of February, 1745, at Versailles, the dauphin was married to Marie-Thérèse-Antoinette-Raphaëlle, infante of Spain, daughter of Philip V., and younger sister of Marie-Anne-Victoire, to whom his father had been betrothed. Thus the affront offered by sending that princess back to Spain was wiped out. The marriage was celebrated with much pomp and magnificence; nothing like it had ever been seen. "As the king is much in need of money," says Barbier, "especially for the great expense of the dauphin's wedding, many Tontine associations have been instituted."

The day that the dauphine reached Etampes, the king, who had gone thither to meet her, said to her: "What a beautiful day for a journey." She replied: "Sire, that is

not what I am most afraid of; I was sure that you would receive me kindly. I am more in dread of to-morrow's journey, and the next day's, for all eyes will be upon me, and I may not find people's hearts so favorably disposed toward me."

The new dauphine was not pretty, but she had an expressive, speaking face. Her affability won all hearts. She told Madame de Brancas that she did not understand how any one could get into a passion, and that if she could imagine any possible contingency in which such a thing should be necessary, she would ask somebody else the night before to undertake the task for her.

This wedding was a source of distraction to the king, who thought no more of poor Madame de Châteauroux, only six months dead. Entertainments followed fast upon one another, and the court was in a blaze of glory. How superb they were, those fêtes at Versailles, the apotheosis of luxurious magnificence. And then the brilliant *bal masqué* of the 25th of February, given in the glistening Galerie des Glaces, the abode of divine transport, resplendent sanctuary of absolute monarchy, the modern Olympus, which seemed as if it were made for gods and goddesses! We can imagine the aristocratic throng, ushered in by the ambassadors' staircase, making the circuit of the magnificent rooms, the salles of Venus, Diana, Mars, Mercury, and Apollo, and the Salon de la Guerre, and emerging at last into the splendor and brilliancy of the famous gallery, where

the fairy-like ball was in progress beneath the arches decorated by the magic pencil of Lebrun! We can picture to ourselves the animated scene: the good-humored uproar; the enchanting strains of the orchestra; the snatches of clever or amorous conversation; the bright eyes sparkling under the mask, and the colossal mirrors which reflect superb costumes in bewildering variety, — fabled divinities of Olympus, great lords and ladies of the Middle Ages, shepherds and shepherdesses *à la Watteau;* and all this with the innumerable clusters and pyramids of candles, baskets of flowers, and a perfect shower of diamonds and precious stones; and to enhance the brilliancy and *éclat* of the occasion, the mysterious presence of the monarch, the handsomest man in his kingdom, hiding his royal features beneath the folds of his domino!

In this age of bourgeois supremacy it is very difficult for us to imagine such sumptuous scenes of festivity. "We children of a cruel and bloody revolution," says M. Capefigue, "see these galleries of glass and gold crowded with a mob in rough clothes and clattering hob-nailed boots, like a torrent of muddy water thrown upon the beds of tuberoses and beautiful flowers of all sorts."

Let us not forget that there was much of the spirit of chivalry and gallantry, of joyous unconcern, animation and lofty spirit, and refined elegance in these last glorious days of the nobility of France. The men who were prominent in that generation, if they were to return to earth now, would find ours shabby and irksome.

The echoes of the orchestra had scarcely died away ere they were succeeded by the din of battle. Two months and a half after this superb ball, Louis and his son were with the army. The king was desirous that the dauphin, though he was but sixteen, should set a good example; and on the glorious day of Fontenoy the young man won the admiration of the old soldiers by his spirit and courage.

Louis XV. was a fortunate father. His son was a pattern of filial respect. His six daughters, Mesdames Elisabeth, Henriette, Adélaïde, Victoire, Sophie, and Louise, all save Adélaïde, educated at the convent of Fontevrault, were most devoutly inclined, and most tenderly attached to their father. Only one of the six was married, — Madame Elisabeth, who espoused in 1739 the infant Don Philip, son of the King of Spain; the consequent separation from her was a bitter grief to Louis. In 1745 only Henriette and Adélaïde were with their father, — Victoire, Sophie, and Louise being still at Fontevrault; and it was an extraordinary thing that with all his kindness and affection for his children, the king allowed them to remain at a convent eighty leagues from Versailles, when he might so easily have located them in a neighboring convent at least, if not actually under his own roof.

To complete this sketch of the royal family in 1745, we have only to say a word or two of the Duc d'Orléans and his son the Duc de Chartres.

Born in 1703, and left a widower by the death of his wife, a princess of Baden, in 1726, the Duc d'Orléans, only son

of the regent, was seldom seen at court. The untimely death of his wife, whom he had the misfortune to lose after only two years of wedded bliss, had turned his mind to grave and devout thoughts. He had become almost an anchorite in his mode of life. In 1730 he resigned the office of colonel-general, in order to be more independent in his movements, and free to make frequent pilgrimages to the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève. In 1742 he definitively abandoned political life, and left the Council of State to take up his abode permanently at his cherished abbey, where he led the life of a monk, dividing his time between study and prayer. He left the management of his affairs to his mother, reserving for his own use an income of 1,800,000 livres, which he spent in charity almost entirely.

An interesting figure is that of this prince, so little like his father! — a true Christian, who carried his piety to asceticism, slept upon a straw pallet, drank nothing but water, and went without a fire in winter; who composed, but would not consent to the publication of, works on serious subjects, translated the Psalms with a commentary, and a part of the Old Testament also, and the Epistles of Saint Paul; who wrote a treatise against the theatre, and divers historical and theological disquisitions, — this monkish prince in whose heart the court had stirred a longing for the cloister; who when he died (February 4, 1752) bequeathed his library to the Dominican monks, and his collection of medals to the Abbey of Sainte-Geneviève; and whose funeral oration was composed by Jean Jacques Rousseau.

His son, the Duc de Chartres, was in his twentieth year in 1745. He was a brilliant, gallant young prince, and distinguished himself as a colonel at the battle of Dettingen, and as lieutenant-general at the siege of Fribourg. Married in 1743, to Louise-Henriette de Bourbon-Conti, he loved the gay world as much as his father abhorred it, and was to become one of the leading actors on the stage of the *petits appartements*.

So long as the dauphin had no male issue the Orléans branch stood next in succession to the throne, according to the renunciations of the Treaty of Utrecht, in case of the death of Louis XV. and his son. But, on both sides of the Pyrenees the practical value of those renunciations was much questioned. When Louis XV. was seriously ill, in 1721, before his marriage, Philip V. was all prepared to lay claim to the French crown, if the young king should die.

When the dauphin, still without heir male, was himself like to die, we find Madame du Hausset writing in her "Mémoires": "The king would be in despair to have one of the princes of the blood become heir apparent. He is not fond of them, and looks down on them from such a height that the prospect would be very humiliating to him. When his son was restored to health, he said: 'The king of Spain would have had great sport.' Some say that in this he was right, and that it was only just that he should succeed to the throne of his ancestors; but that if the Duc d'Orléans had had a party at court, he might well have claimed the crown himself."

We have taken a cursory glance at the various members of the royal family in 1745. Let us now turn our attention for a moment to the character of the woman who, rising from the middle class, practically ruled the king and the whole court for twenty years.

II.

THE EARLY LIFE OF MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

THERE are certain names which in themselves sum up a whole social era. Such an one is that name so odorous of gallantry, which rhymes so well with *amour*, a name which seems to have been made expressly to fit one of Watteau's or Lancret's great ladies,—reminiscent of the comic or pastoral opera, worthy to figure in the Temple of Gnidos, and to be held up to admiration in the pretty little verses of the Abbé de Bernis; a name which calls up so many memories of fashionable immorality and artificial emotion, of boudoirs and alcoves, of comedies and gewgaws, of parties and intrigues; the name of the Marquise de Pompadour. Woman, name, and title are each and all pleasing, pretty, and bright; but there is no simplicity or reality about either of the three. The character is that of a comedienne always on the stage. The beauty owes a large part of its celebrity to the resources of extravagance and the devices of the toilet-table. The marquisate is a smuggled one.

Almost before she left her cradle the future favorite seemed predestined for the part she was to play. She was a marvellous baby, an infant phenomenon. She was only nine years old when a fortune-teller predicted that she would

be the mistress of Louis XV. This forecast was a source of unbounded joy to the family, for they believed in it as implicitly as in the Gospels themselves, and determined to leave no stone unturned to bring it to pass. Help yourself, and the devil will help you!

She who was to become the Marquise de Pompadour at this time answered to the humble name of Jeanne Poisson (*Jane Fish*). She was born at Paris, the 29th of December, 1721; her father was a man vulgar to the point of coarseness, François Poisson, formerly clerk to the brothers Paris. In 1726 he was condemned to be hanged for malversation, and was rehabilitated in 1741, after a sojourn of several years in foreign lands. Her mother was a De la Motte, daughter of the contractor who furnished provisions at the Hôtel des Invalides; a very pretty woman she was, very far from faithful to her husband, M. Poisson, and handsomely subsidized by a gallant farmer-general, M. Lenormand de Tournehem. The financier believed, and perhaps rightly, that he was the father of little Jeanne-Antoinette, and took great pains with her education. She was taught everything except virtue. Jéliotte was her instructor in singing and playing the harpsichord, Guibeaudet her dancing-master, and Crébillon taught her elocution. She was an accomplished actress, musician, and songstress. She copied Gaussin and Clairon so closely that they were themselves deceived. She was an admirable horsewoman; she dressed to perfection, and was as lovely as the Loves. Nobody could surpass her in the art of telling a good story. She was attractive, entertaining,

and fascinating. Her mother, in her enthusiasm at the contemplation of so abundant charms, cried, "She is a morsel fit for a king!"

But how to proceed so as to accomplish the soothsayer's prophecy? The lofty post of mistress of the king was occupied only by very grand ladies, — a Comtesse de Mailly, a Comtesse de Vintimille, a Duchesse de Châteauroux. Could little Poisson aspire to the same part which they played? Would not people say, if she persisted in such audacious designs, "What's bred in the bone must come out in the flesh"? Would the Duc de Richelieu allow the nobility thus to be supplanted by a bourgeoise? Mademoiselle Poisson did not despair. She had a fixed idea in her brain, and she firmly believed in what she called her lucky star. Her marriage was the first step on the ladder of ambition. On the 9th of March, 1741, she espoused a wealthy young man, M. Lenormand d'Étioles, deputy-farmer-general, and nephew of her mother's lover, M. de Tournehem. The bride was nineteen, the groom twenty-four; he was madly in love with her, and as his wife promised him that she would never betray him except for the king, he said to himself that he need not worry on that score.

The young lady soon became the fashion. She was the bright, particular star of the financial set, which had made such long strides toward position and power since the latter days of Louis XIV.

In July, 1742, Président Hénault wrote to Madame du Deffand: "I met at Madame de Montigny's one of the

prettiest women I ever saw, a Madame d'Étioles. She is a thorough musician, sings with the greatest taste and spirit, writes ballads by the hundred, and plays comedy parts at Étioles on a stage as fine as that of the Opera, provided with shifting scenery, and all the mechanical appliances."

She laid her plans for ultimate triumph with consummate skill. The trumpets of Fame were at her service, for she numbered among her friends, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Fontenelle, and the Abbé de Bernis. At Paris, in her mansion, Rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, and in her country-house at Étioles, near Corbeil, she led a luxurious, indolent life of pleasure. She was an enchantress, a siren. But she had only one object in life, to bring her witchery to bear upon the king. She disdained any lesser conquest.

The man she must see at her feet was Louis XV. To achieve that object she exhausted all the wiles of feminine coquetry. Never was more persistent manœuvring, more cunning scheming. She had to play the part of the love-lorn, passionate maiden, to follow the king about when he was hunting in the forest of Sénart, to keep herself constantly before him, passing and repassing, a lovely apparition, as of the nymph of the woods, amid the escort and the horses and dogs, — one day robed in azure blue in a rose-lined phaeton, and the next in a rose-colored dress in a phaeton lined with azure; one day in the saddle, the next driving, with her own little hands, a pair of sorrels, swift as light, in an elegant shell-shaped carriage of rock-crystal.

The king asked the name of the lovely, stylish creature. Then he sent her some game from his bag. Madame d'Étioles was hopeful; the Duchesse de Châteauroux being dead, she felt sure of stepping into her shoes.

The *bals masqués* which were given in honor of the dauphin's wedding gave her an excellent opportunity to put herself on exhibition. At the ball at the Hôtel de Ville the fairest women of the bourgeoisie were grouped together upon a platform of velvet, silk, and gold. Madame d'Étioles was in the character of Diana the Huntress, with powdered wig, quiver on her shoulder, and silver bow in her hand. She removed her mask an instant, and pretended to let fly an arrow at the king. "Fair huntress," he cried, "the shafts which fly from your bow are deadly." She resumed her mask and glided into the throng, letting fall her lace handkerchief as she fled. Louis XV. stooped to pick it up, and like a sultan gallantly threw it after the fair unknown. "He has thrown the handkerchief!" the unlookers murmured on all sides.

The fulfilment of Madame d'Étioles's destiny was at hand. She had no fault to find with her husband, to whom she had borne two children: a son born in 1741, who lived only six months; and a daughter, Alexandrine, born in 1743, and who lived till 1754. This husband was an estimable man, amiable and affectionate, easy to get along with, dead in love with his wife, not at all jealous, happy and proud to be the spouse of the loveliest woman in Paris. But what would you have? Madame d'Étioles had taken it into

her head to be the king's mistress; it was the whim of a frivolous woman, which she was absolutely determined to gratify.

Taking advantage of a trip which her husband made into the country, and chaperoned by one of her relatives, Binet, the dauphine's valet de chambre, she made her way into the palace of Versailles, and made a great parade of her romantic passion for Louis XV. She said that she was threatened with vengeance by M. d'Étioles, and asked the king to give her shelter. The monarch was touched, and installed her secretly in the room formerly occupied by Madame de Mailly.

Poor M. d'Étioles learned what had happened to him as soon as he returned to Paris. He fell in a swoon at the fatal news, then wrote his wife such a touching letter that Louis, after reading it, could not refrain from saying, "Your husband is a very honorable man, Madame."

After a season of despair, the outraged husband bowed to the inevitable. He did not undertake an unequal struggle against a king, but philosophically took his departure for the south of France, to make an investigation into the financial administration, required by his official duty as deputy-farmer-general.

There was the deuce to pay at court. It was hard to realize that a mere bourgeoise, a *robine*, as D'Argenson called her, could be chosen to replace so great a lady as the Duchesse de Châteauroux. The Duc de Luynes wrote in his "Mémoires," under date of March 11, 1745: "All these

bals masqués have made an opening for much talk about the king's latest fancies, and principally a certain Madame d'Étioles, who is young and pretty. They say that she has been here pretty much all the time lately, and that she is the king's final selection. If it is true, in all likelihood she will be simply a bird of passage, and not a regular mistress."

Louis XV., who loved to clothe the simplest things with mystery, amused himself at first by being very discreet. He hid his new favorite. "Nobody knows just where her lodging is," writes the Duc de Luynes (April 23, 1745), "but I think she is provided for in a little room adjoining the *petits cabinets*, and formerly occupied by Madame de Mailly. She does not stay here all the time, but goes and comes from Paris."

A few days later (May 5, 1745), the king and dauphin went to join the army, but Madame d'Étioles had the good sense not to go thither in their wake. She did not remain at Versailles, but withdrew to her country-house at Étioles, where Voltaire and the Abbé de Bernis kept her company. Louis, who thought much more about his new mistress than he did about the war, wrote letters upon letters to her. The Abbé de Bernis, clever explorer of the whole map of the affections, acted as adviser to the favorite, who, with such a secretary, was sure to send her royal lover none but the sweetest and most gracefully conceived of *billets-doux*. In the "Mémoires" of the Duc de Luynes (June 19, 1745) we read: "Madame d'Étioles is still in the

country, near Paris, and has never thought of going into Flanders. The king is more in love with her than ever; he writes letters and sends couriers to her every minute in the day."

All France overflowed with enthusiastic joy when the news came of the victory of Fontenoy, the 11th of May, 1745. But can it be believed that the one whom Voltaire thought proper to congratulate first of all upon that glorious day was, — not Louis XV., not Maréchal de Saxe, — but Madame d'Étioles? Before writing his poem of "Fontenoy," the obsequious poet addressed these lines to the favorite:—

"Quand César, ce héros charmant,
Dont tout Rome fut idolâtre,
Gagnait quelque combat brillant,
On en faisait son compliment
A la divine Cléopâtre.

"Quand Louis, ce héros charmant,
Dont tout Paris fait son idole,
Gagne quelque combat brillant,
On doit en faire compliment
A la divine d'Étiole."

France, always intoxicated with success, was in a state of delirious joy. The Parliament of Paris sent a deputation to Lille to congratulate the king upon his victory, and to beg him, "in the future, not to expose his sacred person as he has done, because the happiness and welfare of the State depend upon it." All the parliaments of the kingdom imitated that of Paris, and the first president of the Court

of Aids cried, in his address to the king: "Your Majesty's conquests have succeeded one another so rapidly that we must study to deal gently with the credulity of those who come after us, and moderate the wonder likely to be aroused by these miraculous achievements, lest our future heroes refuse to emulate them or to credit them."

But the conquest which most concerned Louis XV. was that of his new mistress.

In July, 1745, she proudly exhibited eighty love-letters from the amorous monarch; the seal bore these words: *discret et fidèle.* One of the letters was addressed to the *Marquise de Pompadour;* and enclosed the letters-patent by which that title was conferred upon her. The new marquise lost no time in discarding her name of d'Étioles; she also ceased to wear her husband's arms, substituted for them *three towers*, and arrayed her people in a superb livery.

The marquisate delighted Voltaire, who had become poet-laureate as well as the confidential friend of the favorite; his obliging muse thus commemorated the official accession of the new royal mistress: —

"Il sait aimer, il sait combattre;
Il envoie en ce beau séjour
Un brevet digne d'Henri quatre,
Signé: Louis, Mars et l'Amour.
Mais les ennemis ont leur tour,
Et sa valeur et sa prudence
Donnent à Gand, le méme jour,
Un brevet de ville de France.

Ces deux brevets, si bien venus,
Vivront tous deux dans la mémoire.
Chez lui, les autels de Vénus
Sont dans le temple de la Gloire."

We may be forced to conclude that the good democrats were in rather too much of a hurry to erect a statue to Voltaire.

III.

THE NEW MARQUISE.

LOUIS'S thirst for glory was satiated. Burning to see the newly created marquise once more, he left camp on the 1st of September, 1745, and returned to Versailles where his mistress was awaiting him, lodged in the former apartments of the Duchesse de Châteauroux.

This change of dynasty was officially promulgated; the pretence of mystery was at an end. The Marquise de Pompadour was presented on the 15th of September, in conformity with the demands of etiquette. This disgraceful, absurd ceremony was the sole topic of conversation at court. Every one wondered how the queen would receive her. The king, his wife, and his mistress were thus put on parade, as it were, and the stately ceremony of former days degenerated into a mere burlesque. The Princesse de Conti, whose extravagance and debts seemed to condemn her to play such complaisant parts, was the lady who had the honor of presenting her.

The marquise first made her bow to the king, whose features betrayed his easily understood embarrassment. As she went from his presence into the queen's salon she could not overcome her agitation.

But Marie Leczinska, kind and indulgent to excess, restored her self-possession by a most gracious reception. Referring to one of the very few high-born dames with whom Madame de Pompadour was connected, she said: "Tell me something about Madame de Saissac. It has given me great pleasure to see her now and then at Paris."

The marquise, touched with gratitude, was at a loss for words to reply. She flushed deeply as she stammered, "Madame, I most earnestly hope to please you."

The Abbé de Bernis thus sang the praises of the new Queen of Cythera: —

"Tout va changer: les crimes d'un volage
Ne seront plus érigés en exploits.
La Pudeur seule obtiendra notre hommage.
L'amour constant rentrera dans ses droits.
L'exemple en est donné par le plus grand des rois,
Et par la beauté la plus sage."

Louis's choice was made; thenceforward the gallant monarch boasted of his fidelity.

What think you of that "modesty" (*pudeur*) and that "discretion" (*sagesse*)? As Sainte-Beuve well says, these poets have a way of looking at things which is all their own.

There was flattery *ad nauseam*, but there was also much criticism. The great ladies could not accustom their eyes to the sight of a bourgeoise occupying the post of mistress of the king. They kept a malevolently sharp, wakeful eye upon this upstart marquise, who chose to give herself the

airs which belong only to noble birth and high station. They remembered that her grandfather supplied provisions to the Hôtel des Invalides. She was a butcher's granddaughter, they said; and they wore threadbare all the possible jokes about meat and fish (*poisson*); they accused her of playing her part awkwardly, like a grisette in the garb of a marquise.

Indignant beyond measure to see at Versailles a royal mistress in whose selection he, the arbiter of fashion, had no hand, the Duc de Richelieu endeavored, if we can believe Duclos, "to make the king look upon her simply as a bourgeoise out of her sphere, a mere bird of passage, the fancy of a moment, who was not fitted to demean herself creditably at court. If she made the least slip in manners or language, she was the butt of sarcasm from all quarters as soon as her back was turned. Louis said: "I must teach her, and I shall be very glad to do it."

Madame de Pompadour had the good sense to maintain an humble and submissive demeanor when she appeared before the queen. The lofty rank and the exemplary virtue of Marie Leczinska had a salutary effect upon her. We find this curious passage in the "Mémoires" of the Duc de Luynes: "Day before yesterday, Madame de Pompadour said to Madame de Luynes, as they were returning from mass, that she was in a state of deepest anxiety and grief; that she knew that she had been foully calumniated to the queen; and, without explaining to what she referred, she went on to say that she hoped the queen would not give

credit to the calumny, and ended by begging her to speak to the queen about it." This was Madame de Luynes' letter to Madame de Pompadour: "I have spoken to the queen, Madame, and I earnestly besought her to tell me frankly whether she had any fault to find with you; she replied most graciously that she had none at all, and that she was, on the contrary, very sensible of your marked purpose to make yourself agreeable to her on all occasions; she even requested me to write to you to that effect."

To this the marquise replied: "You have given me new life, Madame la Duchesse; for three days I have been in the greatest distress, as you can easily believe, knowing as you do, my regard for the queen. I have been horribly slandered to the dauphin and dauphine, who have been so kind as to permit me to demonstrate the falsity of the horrible things which were laid at my door. I was told, some days before, that the queen had been made to think ill of me: judge of my despair, who would give my life for her, whose favor is every day more precious to me. It is certain that the more gracious she is to me, the more vindictively will the jealous wretches here busy themselves in heaping slanders upon me, unless she is kind enough to be on her guard against them, and will deign to let me know the charges brought against me. I shall have no difficulty in defending myself; my clear conscience is my guaranty for that. I hope, Madame, that your friendship for me, and your knowledge of my character even more, will bear me out in what I write. I fear I shall have wearied you with

so long a tale: but my heart is so touched that I was fain to show it. You know my high regard for you, Madame; it will end only with my life." (February, 1746.)

Again we read in the "Mémoires" of the Duc de Luynes (March, 1746): "Madame de Pompadour, who knows the queen's passion for flowers, is very particular to send her nosegays as often as she can; she continues to seek opportunities to make herself agreeable to her."

It may be that the queen said to herself that, after all, if a mistress were a necessary evil, better she than another. The king, since Madame de Pompadour assumed control of him, was a little less gloomy, and seemed to take rather more interest in life. But, in the society of the favorite he lost the energy requisite to maintain the success of the French arms, or to put his name to a really glorious treaty of peace.

While Louis was thus wasting his time and force in frivolities the Maréchal de Saxe overran all Belgium. Louis was with the army only from the 4th of May to the middle of June, 1746. After entering Antwerp in triumph he hastened back to Versailles, ostensibly in order that he might be present at the accouchement of the dauphine, but really to see Madame de Pompadour.

The dauphine died in premature childbed in July. "She had become," says D'Argenson, "as thorough a Frenchwoman as if she had been born at Versailles." Her death caused some regret, but the everlasting round of entertainments began again very soon, and Louis XV., after

a brief period of mourning, resumed his customary course of amusements and delusory enjoyment.

The success of his troops was as brilliant as it was rapid. France had never held better cards, nor had a more magnificent opportunity to bind together all the northern States in a solid union. But although they could win battles, they had no ability to gather the fruits of victory. The king did not understand his mission. He thought much more about Madame de Pompadour than about the war; and while his soldiers were fighting for him so gallantly, he, completely given over to frivolity and trifling, was amusing himself, or trying to amuse himself, at Versailles. This indifference became a very serious matter for the nation; all the results of the war were thrown away by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (October 18, 1748).

It was thought that Louis XV., who was master of all Belgium, of two Dutch provinces, of Savoy, and the County of Nice, would insist upon keeping a part, at least, of his conquests; but to the general amazement, he announced that he did not propose to negotiate like a shopkeeper, but like a king. This most extraordinary expression meant that France would claim nothing, — nothing for so many dearly bought victories, nothing for half a million lives sacrificed, nothing for twelve hundred millions of livres added to the national debt.

Louis restored all the conquered cities and territories. He agreed not to rebuild the fortifications of Dunkirk; he recognized the right of the Protestant Hanoverians to the

English throne; and even carried his courtesy for the conquered of Fontenoy so far as to expel from France the heroic Charles Edward, the Pretender. Add to all this that the French navy was in a ruinous condition, similar to that of Spain, and that the time was not far away when the English sailor might well speak of the "Britannic Ocean." To be sure, the infant Don Philip, husband of Louis's oldest daughter, obtained the duchies of Parma and Plaisance. But that was a very trifling advantage to set off against the sacrifice of so many men and so much treasure.

The peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was tremendously unpopular, as was to be expected. "A devil of a peace!" was the common expression at Paris. All the odium was cast upon the woman who, in the capacity of queen *de la main gauche*, busied herself with diplomacy, finance, and the military.

In 1746 Voltaire wrote to Louis XV.:—

> "Grand roi, Londres gémit, Vienne pleure et t'admire.
> Ton bras va décider du destin de l'empire.
> La Sardaigne balance et Munich se repent,
> Le Batave, indécis, au remords est en proie;
> Et la France s'écrie au milieu de sa joie:
> 'Le plus aimé des rois est aussi le plus grand!'"

In 1748 everything was changed; London no longer shuddered, nor was Vienna lost in admiration. There were no signs of penitence in Munich, or remorse among the Dutch, and the grandeur of the best-beloved of kings was rather under a cloud. The seeds of the disastrous seven-

years' war were already germinating. France, which loves only success, no longer compared Madame de Pompadour to the beautiful Gabrielle. But the favorite, on whose devoted head satire and ridicule were showered so abundantly, had a great source of consolation; her theatre of the *petits cabinets* at Versailles succeeded beyond expectation, and although her political efforts were met with a storm of hisses, as an actress she was rapturously applauded.

IV.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR'S THEATRE.

"I HAVE seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit. I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?"

As the Ecclesiast thought, so thought Louis XV. Like Solomon, he was aweary. And this same weariness was the nightmare of Madame de Pompadour's existence. How to divert and amuse a man who no longer could amuse himself was the problem she had to solve. The favorite trembled for her sovereignty. At the very commencement of her favor she saw unmistakable signs of indifference and lassitude on the part of her royal lover. D'Argenson wrote in 1747, "La Pompadour is to have her walking-ticket, and the king proposes to live in the bosom of his family."

The marquise was afraid that the sovereign, who had in his nature a stratum of the religious sentiment of which he was himself hardly aware, but which was nevertheless sincere, might take a notion some day to become devout in

good earnest. For that reason it was her aim to turn him from serious reflection at any price, and plunge him, in spite of himself, into the whirl of sham pleasures, of which he well knew the inanity and wretchedness.

Amid the splendors of Versailles, the new marquise thought regretfully of her success as an amateur *comédienne.* The echo of the applause to which she had become used upon the stage of the little theatre of M. Lenormand de Tournehem at Étioles, and of Madame de Villemur at Chantemerle, still resounded in her gratified ear.

Those who have become accustomed to the passions and vanities of the stage find it hard to get along without them. Madame de Pompadour was homesick for the footlights and the boards. To play comedy parts is to afford a lovely young woman such a fine chance to show herself off. To know that she is the cynosure of every eye, to exhibit her charms, and her beautiful wardrobe in the bright glare of the footlights, to be welcomed as soon as she appears upon the scene with a murmur of admiration, to receive at the close of the performance a shower of flowers and wreaths, and last of all, when she re-enters the salon, the actress transformed into the grande dame, to gather up complimentary speeches and verses and enthusiastic flattery upon every side, — what a triumph for a woman *à la mode;* what exquisite delight for a coquette!

Ladies at the very top of the social ladder are often jealous of actresses. They are chagrined to recognize that they do not possess that peculiar power of fascination which

belongs to *comédiennes.* They envy their power of attracting the close attention of a whole theatre, of becoming the objective point of every glance, and the subject of every flattering remark, and of being able to say to their lovers after a professional triumph: "I played for thee alone, and thought only of thee: these flowers which were thrown to me, I give to thee." They envy the intoxication of these echoing ovations, compared with which all worldly flattery seems colorless. Above all they envy that power of transformation by which the self-same woman may become a shepherdess or a queen, a nymph or a goddess, so that a man who worships a single fair one who is incessantly changing from one character to another finds himself faithful and inconstant at the same time.

Such were Madame de Pompadour's reasons for wishing to renew her histrionic efforts at Versailles. She gradually accustomed Louis to the idea. Holy Week always had a depressing effect upon him, tortured as he was by remorse and ashamed to play so ill his part of eldest son of the Church. She conceived the plan of enlivening that dreaded season by performances, half-religious, half-worldly in character. With a company divided between professionals and amateurs she gave concerts of sacred music.

This Lent *à la* Pompadour, this mixture of church and opera, church-music transformed into chamber-music, — all this was well suited to such a temperament as the king's and to an inconsistent and fictitious religious sentiment like his. The courtiers of course went into raptures over the mar-

quise's beautiful voice. They reminded the king of her triumphs in the little theatres of Étioles and Chantemerle, and commiserated him because he had never seen so remarkable an actress in her favorite parts. Sacred music had served its purpose, and had to make way for music of another character.

Madame de Pompadour attained her object. A theatre was built at Versailles, — a theatre in miniature, a perfect little jewel-box.* The location selected was the gallery hard by the former Cabinets Médailles, a part of the king's *petits appartements* (salle No. 137 of the "Notice du Musée" etc). Almost a third part of the orchestra was composed of amateurs belonging to the most illustrious families; the remaining two thirds were professionals. The chorus was taken from the king's band of singers. The ballet was composed of children of both sexes from nine to thirteen years of age, who were provided with positions in the *corps de ballet* of the Opera, the Théâtre-Français, or Comédie-Italienne, after they reached the latter age. Many of the little girls subsequently became distinguished in the annals of choregraphy and licentiousness.

Famous painters, Boucher at their head, decorated the theatre. The *mise en scène* and costumes were of unequalled magnificence.

Coming to the actors and actresses, there were the Duc de Chartres, Duc d'Ayen, Duc de Duras, Duc de Nivernais,

* See the careful and interesting little work of M. Adolphe Julieu: Histoire du Théâtre de Mme. de Pompadour, dit Théâtre des petits cabinets.

Duc de Coigny, Marquis d'Entraigues, Comte de Maillebois, Duchesse de Brancas, Marquise Livry, Comtesse d'Estrades, Madame de Marchais, and last and greatest of all, the leading lady of the troupe, the Armida of all these enchantments, the Marquise de Pompadour.

The Duc de La Vallière was selected as manager of the company; for deputy-manager the choice fell upon Moncrif, the *cat-historian*, reader to the queen, and member of the Académie; the Abbé de La Garde, librarian to the marquise, was secretary and prompter.

Madame de Pompadour drew up the rules for the government of the troupe, ten in number, which were approved by the king:—

"1. To be admitted as a member, the applicant must prove that it is not his first appearance in comedy, as the troupe is not a school for tyros.

"2. Each member must specify the line of parts he or she desires to be cast for.

"3. No member shall be allowed, except by unanimous consent, to assume a part outside of the line for which he has been cast.

"4. No member shall be allowed, in case of his absence, to select a substitute, that privilege being expressly reserved to a majority of all the members.

"5. Upon the return of the absentee, he will resume his former line of parts.

"6. No member shall decline to play a part within his specified line, on the ground that it is not suited to his style, or that it requires too much exertion.

"7. The actresses alone shall have the selection of the plays to be given.

"8. They shall also have the privilege of naming the days on which performances shall take place, fixing the number of rehearsals, and at what day and hour they shall be held.

"9. Each actor shall be required to be on hand at the precise hour appointed for a rehearsal, under penalty of a fine, whose amount shall be determined by the actresses.

"10. The actresses alone may have half an hour's grace, and shall themselves fix the penalty for being more than that behindhand.

"A copy of these rules shall be furnished to each member, who shall be required to bring it to every rehearsal."

Madame de Pompadour was quite right in making strict regulations, for it is no easy matter to enforce the least discipline upon a troupe made up of fashionable people. The intriguing spirit of the courtier joins hands with the vanity of the actor.

Oh, the petty jealousies and vanities! What manœuvring to obtain such and such a part; what begging and scheming merely to carry off a ticket for a seat in the pit!

Louis XV. gave much serious thought to these follies. The management of this miniature theatre of his gave him no less anxiety than the government of France. He reserved for himself the right of naming the audience, and it was a notable favor to be one of those selected by him.

Despite their very earnest desire to be numbered with the elect on the opening night, the Maréchal de Noailles, the Duc de Gesvres, and the Prince de Conti were unable to secure the coveted privilege.

The initial performance was given on the 17th of January, 1747. The play was "Tartuffe" in which Madame de Pompadour played Dorine. The first season of the little theatre lasted until the 17th of March.

After winning encomiums as an actress in "Tartuffe" the "Trois Cousines," and the "Préjugé à la mode," the marquise won another triumph as a singer in "Erigone." "Madame de Pompadour," says the Duc de Luynes, "sang superbly. She has not a great volume of voice, but it has a most agreeable quality; she is a thorough musician, and sings with much taste."

The second season lasted from the 20th of December, 1747, to the 30th of March, 1748. The first performance consisted of a double bill: a comedy, "Mariage fait et rompu," and a pastoral, "Ismène," the words of which were written by Moncrif. The poet courtier inserted four lines in honor of the favorite, which were rather reminiscent of certain confectioners' mottoes: —

> "Dans les jeux que pour vous on prend soin de former,
> Vos talents enchanteurs vous font mille conquêtes,
> Ce fut pour couronner votre art de tout charmer
> Que l'Amour inventa nos fêtes."

Voltaire's "L'Enfant prodigue" was given on the 30th of December, to the great delight of the author.

Madame de Pompadour had promised Gresset to produce "Le Méchant," and she kept her word. The piece required two months of study; it was given on the 6th of February, 1748, with Madame de Pompadour as Lisette. The Duc de Nivernais gave a fine performance of Valère, and the Duc de Chartres played Géronte. Gresset, in his gratitude, thanked the marquise in this fashion:—

"On ne trace que sur le sable
La parole vague et peu stable
De tous les seigneurs de la cour,
Mais sur le bronze inalterable
Les muses ont tracé le nom de Pompadour
Et sa parole invariable."

Pastorals, opera-ballets, and comedies followed one another in rapid succession.* The audience ordinarily consisted of those members of the company who were not in the cast, together with the Maréchal de Duras, all the ministers, Président Hénault, and the Abbé de Bernis. The king had no special seat. He sat in a common chair, and seemed to enjoy himself, in the judgment of the Duc de Luynes.

The marquise was fascinating in the ballet of "Abmasis," in which she wore a stunning costume; an open corsage of rose-colored taffeta, trimmed with silver net-work; petticoat of the same bordered with silver pinking, over a second petticoat of white taffeta stitched with silver, and embroidered with flowers in their natural colors.

* The complete list may be found in M. Julieu's little book.

The male dancers of the troupe were the Marquis de Courtenvaux, premier, the Comte de Langeron, second, the Duc de Beuvron and Comte de Melfort, supported by a *corps de ballet*, composed of young boys and girls. The actresses were coached by Mesdemoiselles Gaussin and Dumesnil, of the Comédie-Française.

Under the title "Comédies et ballets des petits appartements," a collection was published, with this legend on its title-page: "Printed by His Majesty's special command."

Many people were very angry, especially those courtiers who had not succeeded in gaining admission to those much sought-after performances. The Marquis d'Argenson, who had ceased to be Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote on the 1st of May, 1748, in his favorite Danubian peasant style: "An absurd collection has been issued of the pieces played in his Majesty's theatre of the cabinets or *petits appartements*, — wretched, fawning lyric productions. We read there of actors dancing and singing, of general officers and mountebanks, great ladies and women from the theatre. In fact the king passes his days at present in seeing the marquise and these other personages drilled in their parts by all these professional actors, who thus come into familiar relations with the king in a way that is sacrilegious and wicked."

In October, 1748, by signing the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, France had let slip the opportunity to aggrandize herself. Louis XV. consoled himself by aggrandizing the theatre of the *petits cabinets* instead of his kingdom.

New quarters were constructed for it on the landing of the Ambassadors' Staircase,* great care being taken not to injure the marble or the paintings.

The new theatre was a movable one. It could be taken down in fourteen hours, and put up again in twenty-four. It was opened the 27th of November, 1748, with "Les Surprises de l'Amour," a piece written in collaboration by Gentil-Bernard, Moncrif, and Rameau. The theatre was a masterpiece of sumptuous elegance, but Louis XV. was not entertained. He yawned!

On the 10th of December the grand opera of "Tancrède" was presented, Madame de Pompadour singing the part of Herminie. On the 12th the play was "La Mère Coquette," by Quinault. The indefatigable marquise played Laurette. Her triumph was recorded by M. d'Argenson, her bitter foe, who wrote, not without a touch of malice: "The king, who was reported to be weary of the reigning sultana, is more wild over her than ever. She sang and acted so well in the last two ballets at Versailles that his Majesty has complimented her in public, and with no pretence of hiding his infatuation, told her that she was the loveliest woman in France."

The beginning of the year 1749 was signalized by the great quarrel between Richelieu and the Duc de La Vallière. The former was one of the four first gentlemen

* This staircase, which led to the king's *grands appartements* was destroyed in 1750. The present staircase in the wing of the palace was built on the same spot.

of the chamber, whose jurisdiction extended over the *grands appartements* of the king. Now the new theatre was built upon the landing of the Ambassadors' Staircase, which was looked upon as an integral part of the *grands appartements*. The first gentlemen of the chamber claimed consequently, that the one of their number who was on duty was entitled to manage the theatre, and that the Duc de La Vallière was encroaching upon their functions. The Duc d'Aumont, who was on duty in 1748, raised the question, but in a very mild way. Madame de Pompadour mentioned the subject to Louis XV., whose only reply was: "Wait till his Excellency comes" (he always gave Richelieu that title after his Viennese embassy in 1725–28). "You will see then that it will be quite another matter."

His Excellency arrived for his tour of duty at the beginning of 1749, and immediately engaged in a war to the knife with the Duc de La Vallière.

"He made no bones about crossing the plans of little Pompadour," wrote D'Argenson, "and treating her like a chorus-girl from the Opera, having a wide experience of women of that sort, indeed of women of every sort. Absolute mistress as she is of the king, and omnipotent at court, he will torment the life out of her."

But Richelieu went too far. A few days later, D'Argenson wrote again: "M. de Richelieu is making too much ado about this trifling matter of the ballet-theatre. They say that he has acted like an ass; he has come out too openly against the mistress, and she has got the upper hand again.

She is now supposed to be as firmly entrenched in control of affairs as Cardinal de Fleury ever was, — perhaps even more so.

"Woe to the luckless wight who dares try to make head against her to-day! She combines the art of amusing with decision of character, and in addition to the support of the leading members of the ministry, she has in her favor the slavery to habit, which becomes every day more and more pronounced in this gentle and easily led monarch. But woe to the State thus governed by a coquette! Murmurs are heard on all sides; still it is kicking against the pricks to make the least movement of revolt against her. So Richelieu has found it; he had better give up this absurd squabble to devote himself to greater, more important, and more righteous matters. It would have been quite enough if he had refused to attend these operas, and had held himself aloof in a dignified way, as soon as his functions were invaded. The tickets which he gives out to the musicians read like this: 'Such an one will report at such a time, to play in Madame de Pompadour's opera.' He gets the worst of it at every step. The wise friends of those who have any claim to present advise them to put it in the hands of Madame de Pompadour; all must bow to her."

Richelieu, like most fortunate men, resembled a spoiled child. He was exacting, supercilious, and headstrong. However, he had to yield at last. When the quarrel was at its height Louis nonchalantly put this simple question to him: "Richelieu," said he, "how many times have you been in the

Bastille?" "Three," was the bold courtier's reply. But he promised himself that he would not make it four times; so he yielded the point, and the Duc de La Vallière, who continued to be manager of the troupe, was rewarded for his annoyance with the *cordon bleu.*

The third season came to an end on the 22d of March, 1749; the cost of its maintenance amounted to a hundred thousand crowns at least, and Louis, who was not always extravagant, began to find the expense a little out of proportion. He did not get his money's worth of entertainment.

The fourth and last theatrical season of the *petits cabinets* extended from the 26th of December, 1749, to the 27th of April, 1750.

Madame de Pompadour had essayed, with equal success, comedy, opera, and ballet. She desired to add another flower to her crown. After Thalia, Euterpe, and Terpsichore, it was the turn of Melpomene. On the 28th of February, 1750, she played Alzire, in Voltaire's tragedy of that name.

The author, in an ecstasy of delight, hastened to thank the fair interpreter of his thought, just as she was at her toilet, and recited these impromptu lines, which after all are not strikingly original: —

"Cette Américaine parfaite
Trop de larmes a fait couler.
Ne pourrai-je me consoler
Et voir Vénus à sa toilette?"

The king began to tire of these endless performances. He decided that the comedies, ballets, songs, and dances should be discontinued at Versailles, and that all future dramatic representations should be given at the Château of Bellevue. The private theatre there was very small, and not at all suited for a brilliant *mise en scène*. The number of spectators had to be greatly reduced. Accustomed to a real theatre, splendid decorations, and a numerous audience, the actors and actresses lost most of their spirit and enthusiasm. The hour of dissolution was at hand. However, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Devin du Village" was played in 1753, and met with great success, — Madame de Pompadour appearing as Colette. The next day she sent fifty louis to Jean-Jacques, who acknowledged them in the following letter:—

"PARIS, March 7th, 1753.

MADAME, — By accepting the gift which has been handed me from you, I think I have sufficiently shown my respect for the hand whence it comes; and I venture to add, regarding the honor you have done my poor work, that of the two tests to which you have subjected my modesty, that of self-interest is not the most dangerous.

I am, with respect, etc."

The "Devin du Village" was the swan's song. Madame de Pompadour was no longer amusing to Louis XV. So she closed the doors of the theatre at Bellevue, and thenceforth it became the object of her ambition, if she could not entertain the master whose mistress she was said to be, to engross his attention by the devices of a female politician.

V.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR'S GREATNESS.

LOUIS had made of his new mistress what might be called a vice-queen. She enjoyed all the real power of royalty, all the profusion and wealth and adulation, everything, in short, except its moral prestige. Surrounded by her own court, of ministers, churchmen, and great nobles, she sat enthroned amid all the pomp and luxury of actual sovereignty. She was the perfect exemplar of the fashionable woman of society, — fastidious, coquettish, imperious, always acting, with a never satisfied thirst for applause and success, greedy for titles, pleasure, and wealth; assuming the airs, not of a great lady alone, but of a sovereign; having her own courtiers and creatures and poets, and ruling over king and kingdom alike.

M. Arsène Houssaye well says: "Louis XV. had three first ministers, — Cardinal de Fleury, the Duc de Choiseul, Madame de Pompadour." But the marquise was not an ordinary, every-day first minister; she played the dual rôle of minister and mistress. A woman cast for such a laborious part as that has need of all the outward appearance and display of power. The favorite made it a point to have her surroundings decorous and strictly in accordance with

etiquette; to envelop herself in an atmosphere of factitious grandeur. Like the little women who wear enormously high heels, she set herself upon a pedestal. Madame d'Étioles had disappeared, leaving only the Marquise de Pompadour. She was not satisfied with being a marquise, but must needs secure the *tabouret*, with all the honor appertaining to the rank of duchess. At the court theatre she had a close box which she and the king occupied *en tête-à-tête.*

In the chapel a bay in the front gallery was reserved for her and her suite. Her courtiers awaited the hour of her toilet upon her staircase, as they would have waited for an audience in a minister's anteroom. She had a way of saying to the ministers: "Go on as you are doing; I am well pleased with your course;" and to the foreign ambassadors: "On Tuesday the king will not be able to receive you, gentlemen, for I fancy that you will hardly follow *us* to Compiègne."

One of the closets of her suite of rooms was filled with petitions. Petitioners never approached her without a sort of respectful terror. On the panels of her carriage were emblazoned the ducal mantle and velvet cap. A gentleman carried her cape, and waited for her in anterooms. At her carriage door, in the capacity of squire, stood a gentleman of noble blood, a Chevalier d'Hénin, of the family of the Princes de Chimay. She was served at table by a knight of Saint-Louis, Colin, her *maître d'hôtel*, napkin on his arm. Her *femme de chambre* was a lady of

quality, Madame du Hausset, who has left some entertaining "Mémoires."

The omnipotent favorite by no means neglected her own family. Her father was ennobled in 1747. Her brother, Abel Poisson, became successively Marquis de Vandières, Marquis de Marigny, and Marquis de Ménars. A marquisate not being sufficient for his worth, he obtained an office created for Colbert, that of superintendent of royal buildings. He was a patron of artists, a Mæcenas, an *arbiter elegantiarum*. The king, who treated him as his brother-in-law, gave him the *cordon bleu*, and put him on a level with the greatest nobles of the kingdom, — made him their peer and companion.

Little Alexandrine, daughter of Madame de Pompadour and M. d'Étioles, was educated at the Convent of the Assumption in Paris. The nuns showed her the most marked consideration. She was called by her own baptismal name, as was the custom with none but princesses of the blood, and they dreamed of the most brilliant *partis* in France for her.

Madame de Pompadour did not wish to lay aside pomp even in death. She purchased from the family of La Trémoille a superb tomb in the Capucin Convent, Place Vendôme in Paris. There she built a magnificent mausoleum, wherein the body of her mother, Madame Poisson, was deposited, and where she reserved a spot for herself.*

* See the learned work of M. Campardon: Mme. de Pompadour, et la cour de Louis XV. 1 vol. Plon.

The favorite's power was not her only resource; for she was possessed of beauty as well,—of beauty, that most potent of weapons. Like a magician she transformed herself at will. Mobile as the clouds in the sky, fickle as the waves of the sea, she was forever changing her rôle, and metamorphosing herself. Never was *comédienne* more clever in the management of feature and expression. Her whole person was instinct with an exquisite grace of movement, extraordinary powers of fascination, a perfection of taste and style which extended even to the least details.

La Tour, the artist in pastel, has left us the best portrait of her bright, sparkling, triumphant features, her eyes beaming with wit and impudence, her satin-like skin, her supple figure,—the perfect harmony and blending of all the elements of that fascinating, coquettish *ensemble.*

All the pomp and magnificence of her surroundings were like the frame of a picture. Like a new Danaë, the marquise disappeared in a shower of gold. We know to a dot just how much she cost France from the 9th of September, 1745, the day of her installation, to the 15th of April, 1764, the day of her death.

M. Le Roy has unearthed a document of undoubted authenticity,* which contains an exact account of all sums expended by the favorite during that period of nearly twenty years. The total is 35,924,140 livres. This statement includes the pension paid to Madame Lebon for having fore-

* Curiosités historiques, by M. Le Roy. 1 vol. Plon.

told, when the marquise was only nine years old, that she would some day be the king's mistress.

Whether in the matter of costumes, or places of abode, or furniture, nothing seemed fine enough for Madame de Pompadour. At Versailles she took possession of the superb suite occupied by the Duc and Duchesse de Penthièvre, on the ground floor, looking out upon the terrace toward the northern garden.* (A part of the Department of Foreign Affairs occupies these rooms to-day. The Minister occupies Madame de Pompadour's private office for his own. Her bedroom is to-day the thirteenth Salle des Maréchaux, and her reception-room the Salle des Guerriers Célèbres).

The favorite had purchased a superb mansion in Versailles itself, communicating by a covered passage-way with her apartments in the palace. (It was the present Hôtel des Reservoirs). In 1748 she became the owner of the country-house of Crécy, and the estate of Aunay, and in 1749, the Château of La Celle, near Versailles. In 1750 she first occupied the enchanted palace, Bellevue, on the high bank of the Seine, between Sèvres and Meudon, where all the arts seemed to have vied with one another to produce magical effects.

The reception-room with its statues by Adam and Falconnet, the banquet-hall with Oudry's pictures of sport with rod and gun, the salon decorated by Vanloo, the apart-

* Nos. 56, 57, 58, 59 of the "Notice," etc. No. 57 was her bedroom, and No. 58 her office.

ments of the marquise with Boucher's fascinating paintings, the park with its beds of rare exotics, fine trees, shady nooks, and sparkling fountains, with the marbles of Pigalle and Coustou scattered here and there, the ever-varying prospect over a seemingly boundless range of vision, — all combined to make this Bellevue a veritable palace of Armida.

The marquise obtained a corner of the small park at Versailles from the king, and there she built a little gem of a palace, which she called the Hermitage. It was a very elegant and costly affair, with an outside appearance of great simplicity. There were hangings of the finest Persian stuffs, wainscot panels decorated by the cleverest artists, and bosky groves of myrtle, lilac, and roses. (This building is no longer in existence. The present Rue de l'Ermitage at Versailles is laid out in part upon its site.)

The marquise had a mansion at Compiègne, and a little box at Fontainebleau. In Paris she bought the Hôtel d'Évreux for seven hundred and thirty thousand livres. It is now the Elysée (official residence of the president of the republic).

At Trianon her rooms were on the same floor as Louis's. At Crécy she received her guests as if it were the abode of royalty. The king's visits to this luxurious dwelling generally lasted three or four days, and cost about one hundred thousand livres.

So puissant a dame could not fail to have a swarm of flatterers. In singing her praises the depths of courtier-adulation were sounded, and lyricism was carried to the

utmost verge of hyperbole. The most extravagant of all in his fawning was Voltaire, — Voltaire, to whom republicans are now erecting statues. He addressed the marquise as a superior being, a goddess, and carried his flattery so far that it became mere absurd platitude. In 1745, when the favorite's reign was just beginning, he sent her these complimentary verses: —

"Sincère et tendre Pompadour,
(Car je peux vous donner d'avance
Ce nom qui rime avec l'amour,
Et qui sera bientôt le plus beau nom de France),
Ce tokai, dont Votre Excellence
Dans Étioles me régala,
N'a-t-il pas quelque ressemblance
Avec le roi qui le donna?
Il est, comme lui, sans mélange;
Il unit, comme lui, la force à la douceur,
Plaît aux yeux, enchante le cœur,
Fait du bien et jamais ne change."

In 1746 the Maréchal de Lowendal took Bergen-Op-Zoom. Thereupon Voltaire congratulated Madame de Pompadour: —

"Les esprits, et les cœurs, et les remparts terrible,
Tout cède à ses efforts, tout fléchit sous sa loi,
Et Berg-Op-Zoom et vous, vous êtes invincibles;
Vous n'avez cédé qu'à mon roi.
Il vole dans vos bras du sein de la Victoire,
Le prix de ses travaux n'est que dans votre cœur.
Rien ne peut augmenter sa gloire,
Et vous augmentez son bonheur."

At the close of that year the marquise rewarded Voltaire by producing "L'Enfant prodigue" at the theatre des petits cabinets, and assuming the rôle of Lise. Then it was that the poet, forgetting everything but his delight, addressed the fair amateur in these lines, which made the daughters of Louis XV. exceeding wroth, and were by no means agreeable to the monarch himself:—

"Ainsi donc, vous réunissez
Tous les arts, tous les dons de plaire;
Pompadour, vous embellissez
La cour, le Parnasse et Cythère.
Charme de tous les yeux, trésor d'un seul mortel,
Que votre amour soit éternel!
Que tous vos jours soient marqués par des fêtes!
Que de nouveaux succès marquent ceux de Louis!
Vivez tous deux sans ennemis
Et gardez tous deux vos conquêtes!"

And still all these madrigals left his zeal unslaked. He wrote in prose as well as verse. In dedicating to the marquise a copy of his "Précis du Siècle de Louis XV.," he inserted a passage in which he congratulated her with a sober face upon the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which had cast such a blight upon the ardor of the nation: "It must be confessed that the tranquillity of Europe dates from the signing of that treaty. People were amazed to learn that it was the result of the urgent advice of a young lady of distinguished rank, famous for her charms and her extraordinary talent, her qualities of mind, and her lofty station. It was the destiny of Europe that that long-drawn-out quarrel

should be begun by a woman (Maria-Theresa) and ended by a woman. The second has done as much good as the first had caused of harm."

Do you wonder, after that, that Madame de Pompadour had an exalted idea of her own merit and intellect, genius even; that she was the victim of most curious delusions as to her own destiny and her character; that she should have taken herself very seriously, — yes, tragically; and that she should have looked upon the slightest adverse criticism of herself or her course as lèse-beauty no less than lèse-majesty?

With such display of magnificence and power, such profusion of gold and jewels and objects of art, such a court of clever and insinuating toadies; with everything to spur her vanity, her coquetry, and her pride, with the means of gratifying every caprice or whim, one might well suppose that the favorite was happy. But no; such was far from being the case.

VI.

THE MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR'S CROSS.

"I PITY you with all my heart, Madame, though all the world envies you." This sage reflection proceeded from the mouth of no less a person than Madame de Pompadour's confidante of all times and seasons, her *femme de chambre*, Madame du Hausset, the woman from whom she had no secrets, who was always in attendance upon her, and to whom she used to say: "The king and myself trust you so entirely that we look upon you as a faithful dog or cat, and talk without restraint before you."

The marquise acknowledged the truth of these gloomy words of her *femme de chambre*. "Ah, yes!" she replied, "my life is like that of a Christian believer, an incessant struggle."

A most strange, most unhappy parallel! for the Christian fights for his God, while the favorite was fighting for the devil. And that was the real secret of her depression. God's love recompenses us for every sacrifice; but woe to the wretched woman who makes herself the slave of a man! Madame de Pompadour placed no reliance upon Louis XV.,

and she was quite right. The Maréchale de Mirepoix said to her one day: "It 's your staircase that the king is attached to; he is used to going up and down; but if he should find some other woman to talk to about hunting and his personal affairs, it would be all the same to him after three days."

Let us listen a moment to Madame du Hausset. She says in her "Mémoires": "Madame had many trials with all her greatness. She frequently received unsigned letters threatening her with poison and murder; but what worried her more than anything else was the fear of being ousted by a rival. I have never seen her more upset than she was one evening on her return from Marly. As she entered the room she angrily threw down her mantle and cape, and undressed herself in a great hurry; then she sent away her other women, and said to me: 'I never imagined such an insolent creature as that Madame de Coislin; I happened to be at the same *brelan* table with her this evening, and you cannot conceive what I suffered. Everybody there, men and women, seemed to devote themselves to watching us. Madame de Coislin said two or three times, looking at me, "*Va tout*," in the most insulting way; and I thought I should faint when she triumphantly announced, "I have a pair of kings!" I wish you could have seen her salute me when she left.'"

Madame du Hausset thereupon asked how the master had acted. "You don't know him, my dear," rejoined the marquise; "if he were to put her here in my place this very

evening, he would treat her coolly before the world and exhibit the greatest warmth toward me."

The favorite was always in a fright about something or other. She had no confidence in the king's devotion, nor in his love or friendship. As M. Paul de Saint-Victor cleverly said, "She passes her time in much the same plight as Scheherezade, seated on the edge of the bed where the Sultan lay asleep, his sword by his side. Like the Sultana's head, her power depends upon the mere whim of her master, according as the tale she tells him is dull or entertaining. And what is going on, during those thousand and one nights, in the harem to which she is not admitted? Who knows that a firman drafted by a grisette will not issue to-morrow, banishing her to the depths of some distant province?"

With all her skill in inventing frivolous amusements, and all her paraphernalia of fascination, the marquise could not succeed in keeping her master entertained. Madame du Hausset says in another place: "The king is habitually very gloomy, and is very fond of anything which reminds him of death, although he dreads it terribly." This sombre turn of mind was extremely disheartening to his mistress. "What an extraordinary way of amusing one's self," she would say, "to be forever harping on things which one should try to forget, especially when one has everything to make one's life happy!" Madame de Pompadour did not consider, when she spoke thus, that a debauchee's happiness cannot long endure.

The sovereign and his favorite were both suffering from the same disease, — their consciences were not at rest. To both alike might well have been applied the lines which the poet Lucretius addressed to the Epicurean youths of Rome; which ran thus: "They inhale sweet perfumes, they deck themselves out with garlands and wreaths; but the vapor of bitterness rises from the very root of their pleasures, and the lacerating thorn is hidden beneath their flowers; remorse is crying aloud in their soul, and reproaching them with the days they have wasted in idleness."

Of what avail are luxury and magnificence? In all her châteaux, in all her sumptuous mansions, the marquise had her fill of flattery, but nowhere did she meet with true esteem. In truth all this display of mock grandeur, all this counterfeit propriety was a mere burlesque. It was all to no purpose, for the mistress of Louis XV. was, in fact, only the first of her class. Although she was loaded down with proofs of royal munificence, she would never admit that she was content. Ambition is like debauchery — insatiable. Love of wealth and love of applause never cry. "Hold, enough!"

The sumptuous places of abode which the favorite succeeded in laying her hands on were, after all, naught but monuments of her shame. Her mansion at Paris (now the Elysée) was called the palace of the queen of courtesans, *ædes reginæ meretricum.* When the equestrian statue of the king was unveiled in the Place Louis XV. the onlookers, pointing to the four allegorical figures, Strength, Prudence,

Justice, and Love of Peace, carved by Pigalle at the four corners of the pedestal, said that they were the four most famous of the king's mistresses: Mesdames de Mailly, de Vintimille, de Châteauroux and de Pompadour; and a paper whereon these lines were written was affixed to the statue itself: —

"Grotesque monument, infâme piédestal,
Les Vertus sont à pied et le vice à cheval."

A good deal of ridicule was bestowed upon the honors with which the all-powerful marquise had plentifully endowed her family. When her mother, the mistress of Lenormand de Tournehem, the farmer-general, departed this life the following quatrain had great vogue: —

"Ci-gît qui, sortant d'un fumier,
Pour faire sa fortune entière,
Vendit son honneur au fermier
Et sa fille au propriétaire."

When her brother, Abel Poisson, become Marquis de Marigny and superintendent of crown buildings, received the ribbon of the Order of the Holy Ghost (*cordon bleu*), it was said that the fish was "dressed *au bleu*."

In 1754 Madame de Pompadour had the misfortune to lose her only daughter, Alexandrine d'Étioles, who was but eleven years old. She would have liked to arrange a match between her and the young Vintimille, who was commonly supposed to be the son of Louis XV. One day she brought the two together, as if by chance, at the Château of Bellevue; drawing the king's attention to them, she said, "That

would be a fine couple." Louis, however, received the suggestion more than coolly. Madame de Pompadour subsequently said to Madame du Hausset: "If it were Louis XIV. he would make the boy a Duc du Maine, but I do not ask so much as that; an office at court, and a ducal patent for his son are little enough; and it is because he is his son, my dear, that I prefer him to all the little dukes at court. My grandchildren in that case would resemble their grandfather and grandmother both, and this combination, which I hope to see, would make me very happy some day." "Tears filled her eyes as she said these words," adds Madame du Hausset.

Sainte-Beuve has very cleverly unmasked this harlequinade of false sentiment. "It seems to me," says the prince of critics, "that the bourgeois vein crops out, diverted but ineradicable, in that wish of Madame de Pompadour's; she introduces considerations of affection and family arrangements into her hopelessly immoral life. She has tender sentiments; she anticipates the deep emotion of a grandmother. There might have been made of this touching episode of the marquise, with tears in her eyes, calling the king's attention to the two little ones, a fine picture, which I would have called a 'Greuze-Pompadour.'"

It was very bitter for the favorite to abandon the matrimonial schemes she had so fondly cherished. She next pitched upon the young Duc de Fronsac, son of the Duc de Richelieu, as a mate for her daughter. She caused the celebrated courtier to be approached on the subject. He

replied by a thinly veiled refusal. "My son," said he, "has the honor of belonging, through his mother, to the family of Lorraine; I cannot, therefore, dispose of his hand without the consent of that family; but I shall make all haste to ask their approval, if the marquise persists in her intention."

Madame de Pompadour understood, and did not persist. She formed another plan for marrying her daughter, who was forthwith promised to the young Duc de Pecquigny, son of the Duc de Chaulnes, of the De Luynes family. But at the moment when the contract was to be signed Mademoiselle d'Étioles suddenly sickened and died. She was buried in the tomb which her mother had purchased from an illustrious family. "The bones of the La Trémoilles," says the Princesse de Talmond, "will be rather astonished to have their rest disturbed by the fins of the Poissons."

We have spoken of the nauseating sycophancy of which the marquise was the object. These hyperbolical eulogies from interested parties met a fearful counterblast. While the court was time-serving and obsequious, Paris was pitiless. There was an incessant storm of puns and satires and invectives. In former days there were the "*Mazarinades;*" the "*Poissonades*" were their worthy successors. The minister Maurepas was the instigator, often the author too, of the violent diatribes in rhyme which called forth the epigram that France was an absolute monarchy tempered by song. The common herd took their revenge in ditties of more than Gallic animation. We will cite one of

many hundreds. It was sung to the tune of "Trembleurs d'Isis":—

"Les grands seigneurs s'avilissent,
Les financiers s'enrichissent,
Et les Poisson s'agrandissent;
C'est le règne des vauriens.
On épuise la finance,
En bâtiments, on dépense,
L'Etat tombe en décadence,
Le roi ne met ordre à rien.

"Une petite bourgeoise,
Elevée à la grivoise,
Mesurant tout à sa toise,
Fait de la cour un taudis;
Louis, malgré son scrupule,
Froidement pour elle brûle,
Et son amour ridicule
A fait rire tout Paris.
. . . .
"La contenance éventée,
Et chaque dent tachetée,
La peau jaune et truitée,
Les yeux froids et le cou long,
Sans esprit, sans caractère,
L'âme vile et mercenaire,
Les propos d'une commère,
Tout est bas chez la Poisson.

"Si dans les beautés choisies
Elle était des plus jolies,
On pardonne des folies,
Quand l'objet est un bijou.
Mais pour sotte créature
Et pour si plate figure
Exciter tant de murmure,
Chacun juge le roi fou."

But songs did not satisfy the public spleen. There were some pretentious pieces of verse, too, which fairly dripped with venom and hatred. Imitations, more or less clever, of Juvenal, were the basis of satirical productions overflowing with gall and wormwood. The performances on the stage of the *petits cabinets* were notably successful in arousing the indignation of these diatribe-makers. One of them shrieked at Madame de Pompadour: —

"Parmi ces histrions qui règnent avec toi,
Qui pourra désormais reconnaître son roi?"

Another expressed himself thus: —

"Sur le trône français on fait régner l'amour.
La fureur du théâtre assassine la cour.
Les palais de nos rois jadis si respectables,
Perdent tout leur éclat, deviennent méprisables;
Ils ne sont habités que par des baladins!"

A pamphlet entitled, "L'École de l'homme, ou parallèle des portraits du siècle et des tableaux de l'Écriture-Sainte," (The School of Mankind, or a Comparison between the Portraits of the Century and the Pictures of the Holy Scriptures), contained attacks of this nature upon Louis XV.:

"Lindor, too ill at ease with all his grandeur to take a girl from the wings, contents himself as becomes a prince of his rank; he builds a fine mansion, and has a theatre constructed within, where his mistress becomes a dancer in name and in fact. Ye men, vain with the vanity of mountebanks, ye infatuated Candaules, do not think that the last of the Gyges died in Lydia!"

One must read the memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson, and of Barbier, the advocate, in order to understand and appreciate the detestation which aristocracy and bourgeoisie alike bore to the marquise. And the common people hated her no less; they held her solely responsible for all their misery and wretchedness. The extravagance of the parvenue angered them, and they hated her with a bitter hatred. The popular sentiments were well expressed in this quatrain: —

"Fille d'une sangsue, et sang-sue elle-même,
Poisson, d'une arrogance extrême,
Étale en ce château, sans crainte et sans effroi,
La substance du peuple, et la honte du roi."

An acute observer with sharp ears might hear the Revolution already grumbling in the distance.

Madame de Pompadour could not depend even upon her flatterers. Voltaire, who had burned such quantities of incense at her feet, — the same Voltaire who was the most ardent and eager and enthusiastic of her courtiers at Versailles, — forgot it all in his retreat at Ferney. He quizzed his former idol, and drew a very spiteful picture of her in his poem of "La Pucelle": —

"Telle plutôt cette heureuse grisette
Que la nature ainsi que l'art forma
Pour le sérail ou bien l'opéra,
Qu' une maman avisée et discrète
Au noble lit d'un fermier éleva,
Et que l'Amour d'une main plus alerte

Sous un monarque entre deux draps plaça.
Sa vive allure est un vrai port de reine,
Ses yeux fripons s'arment de majesté
Sa voix a pris le ton de souveraine,
Et sur son rang, son esprit s'est monté."

Madame de Pompadour, quite well aware of the state of public opinion, — for she had her own police, and had much business with the superintendent of the Post, who opened other people's letters for her, — Madame de Pompadour was dismayed by so many venomous attacks. Ill at ease, feverishly nervous, angry with the king and kingdom, esteeming herself a plaything of fate, a woman unjustly betrayed by fortune, with a deep enmity against the great Frederic, who made sport of her; against Louis, who neglected her for the damsels of the Parc-aux-Cerfs; against the clergy, who looked upon her as an instrument of Satan; against the Parliaments, which slighted her; against the nobility, who saw in her only an ambitious bourgeoise; against the bourgeoisie, who blamed her for her immoral life; against the whole French nation, who held her in contempt, — her self-esteem was no less wounded than her pride, and she cried out to her faithful confidante and inseparable companion, Madame du Hausset: "The sorceress promised me that I should have time to repent before I die, and I believe it, for I am sure I shall die a lingering death of chagrin and vexation."

VII.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR AS LADY-IN-WAITING TO THE QUEEN.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR was ready to play any part to maintain her empire. It was not enough to be an actress and a politician; she had no scruples about playing the devotee and the procuress, one after the other, or simultaneously if necessary; she would befriend the Church to-day, and preside over the Parc-aux-Cerfs to-morrow; go through with all imaginable transformations, and put up with the basest bondage, — *omnia serviliter pro dominatione.* Never did minister cling more tenaciously to his portfolio; never had ambitious mortal a more insatiable greed for power.

Louis had a certain amount of real religious feeling, which caused the favorite much anxiety. On days when he threatened to read her one of Bourdaloue's sermons she trembled. With all her audacity she never dared to animadvert upon Church matters before the Very Christian king; for ill-regulated as his conduct was, he would not have suffered the faith of his father to be insulted in his presence. The marquise, to retain her place, would have been only too

glad to assume the austere exterior of Madame de Maintenon; but the difficulty was that both she and the king were married, and the Catholic Church has never compounded with harlotry or adultery.

Madame de Pompadour tried to get around this obstacle. She affected a sort of half-devotion, all worldly, all for show, which was a kind of compromise between God and the devil, the Church and the boudoir, the oratory and the alcove, — a quack devotion, mocking and hypocritical, of which many women furnish examples in our century as well as the last.

From the very beginning of her favor she had chosen to exhibit herself in the chapel at Versailles. Her object was to make herself conspicuous everywhere, even before the altar. It was with that object in view that she asked the queen's leave to carry one of the plates at the ceremony of the Lord's Supper, and to take up the collection at High Mass on Easter Day. But Marie Leczinska, who was so yielding when her own feelings only were in question, was very firm when the respect due to God was at stake; she refused.

The Jubilee of 1751 redoubled the anxiety of the marquise. D'Argenson wrote on the 2d of February: "It is said to be certain that the king will celebrate the Jubilee, and receive the sacrament at Easter. The marquise says that she and the king are only friends now, and that even that sentiment is to be interrupted by fifteen days of retirement."

The attitude of a repentant Magdalene would not have sat very well upon such a woman as Madame de Pompadour. She was very anxious to make a little parade of devotion, but of devotion *à la mode* and worldly, pompous and magnificent. In short, she cared much more for the theatre than for the sanctuary.

D'Argenson wrote again on the 6th of February: "All Paris is talking of the performance of 'Thétis et Pélée' a week ago, at which Madame de Pompadour was present. The actors talked at her in the gallant passages, such as: 'Reign, fair Thétis!' She received it all with an air of triumph which a woman of higher extraction would not have exhibited; for some are vain of the same thing which others cannot undergo without a flush of shame."

But the thought that even such prosperity as hers might fall at any moment, like a house of cards, drove the favorite to distraction. At the very time when (always acting a part, even under the mask of so-called penitence) she was having a statue carved for her château of Bellevue, which represented her in the guise of the goddess of Friendship, she had several attacks of fever, which was irreverently called "the Jubilee fever."

At the same time the woman with whom Louis had begun his scandalous life was at the last extremity. We read in the "Mémoires" of the Marquis d'Argenson, under date of the 27th of March, 1751: "Madame de Mailly, formerly the king's mistress, is dying. She was thought to be improving, but the inflammation of the chest has in-

creased, and the fever makes her case hopeless. The king has not once sent openly to inquire for her, but the Marquis de Gontaud has bulletins four times a day, and hands them to the king, who is afraid of provoking Madame de Pompadour. I am sure that he will be much touched by her death. Devout people, who believe in a just Providence, call attention to the fact that all three of the sisters who sold themselves to the king have died young. She who was the first of all, and was therefore not guilty of incest, dies in the odor of sanctity, the death of the just; indeed, she invited her illness by her devout practices, and there are indications that she will be canonized. Both the others died in horrible agony, and much earlier in life than she. Another of their reflections is that God takes such thought for the king's conversion that this death happens just as the Jubilee is approaching to touch his Majesty's heart, already prepared by the sermons he has heard, and inclined to celebrate his Jubilee with sincere feeling. Meanwhile in the cabinets they are rehearsing plays and ballets, which are performed on the sly."

In Barbier's journal, too, we find analogous reflections upon the marquise's state of alarm. "Everybody," he says, "is waiting eagerly to see what will happen about the Jubilee. They say that Madame de Pompadour fears the consequences of it. There are many people at court, not churchmen alone, but lay men and women, who are expecting that that event will cause the overthrow of the marquise, who, for a year past, has won the cordial hatred

of all the great folks by the power which she abuses. The king can hardly remain at Versailles without celebrating his Jubilee. The public prejudice has reached the point of thinking more of the Jubilee than of Easter, the observance of the latter being obligatory. If he celebrates his Jubilee he cannot decently return two weeks after to the Château de Bellevue, and a month's separation would be dangerous. He has friends at court who, just at present, have in training a new mistress, to unite the party after the Jubilee; for, sad as it is to say it, he must have a plaything; and if he should conceive a sudden fear of the devil, and make up his mind to lead a life of seclusion, it would not be amusing for the courtiers. So it is that the event which is near at hand arouses great excitement among high and low.

On the 30th of March Madame de Mailly breathed her last. In her will she requested to be buried in the common burying-ground among the poor, with naught but a wooden cross to mark her grave. "Her rigorous austerity," says the Marquis d'Argenson, "her penitence, and her poverty, add weight to the public opinion which is daily gathering force against the woman who sits in her seat to-day, and whose rule of conduct is so different. It is remarked, to the credit of religion, that Madame de Mailly, who used often to suffer from attacks of depression, which were really the moving cause of her dismissal by the king, had developed the utmost gentleness and equanimity of temperament. They say that if she was not a saint, no woman ever will be."

Madame de Pompadour was victorious again in this matter. Louis XV. did not allow himself to show any emotion for the death of his former mistress, and notwithstanding the warning from on high, he did not celebrate his Jubilee. But still the marquise was not easy in her mind. D'Argenson wrote on the 11th of December, 1752: "Madame de Pompadour has always spit blood, ever since she was a little girl. *Et in peccato concepit eam mater sua.* She is withering away like a leaf, and to the jealous eye is growing wofully thin."

Again, on the 17th of September, 1753, he says: "The king is developing a superstitious sort of piety, paying more attention to the priests than to good morals. The Maréchal de Richelieu said to me, jokingly: 'The king is as devout as an angel; he is n't willing to move without the bishops in the affairs of Languedoc.'"

Madame de Pompadour had long ceased to appeal to Louis's passions. In default of debauchery she would have been glad to make use of religious influence. She tried to create a new rôle for herself, — a rôle quite new for a favorite to play, having more of the minister than the mistress, — and to legitimatize her connection with the king by its long continuance, and by a certain parade of propriety; in short, to pose as the king's friend and adviser, I had almost said matron.

In her bargaining with the Jesuits about her own conversion, as if it were a diplomatic question, she insisted upon one condition as a *sine qua non*, to wit, that she

should remain at Versailles. But that was just where the difficulty lay. The clergy still retained some little principle, even at this period of their debasement, and the Church respectfully declined to be the dupe of a woman. In order to be free to play her chosen part of companion to the king, female minister, friend, and mediator between the sovereign and the royal family, the crown and Parliament, the clergy and the philosophers, she absolutely must have one thing which she had not, — absolution at the hands of a priest.

To merit and obtain that absolution she had only to withdraw from court; but she would have died first. The atmosphere of Versailles had become necessary to her. Far away from the scene of her sorry triumph she would have wasted away in rage and despair. Louis XV. knew very well that to send her away was to sign her death-warrant. He allowed her to stay by his side, but from compassionate motives alone.

Madame de Pompadour put herself in communication with a Jesuit, Père de Sacy, whom she had known in earlier days, and from whom she hoped to receive absolution, coupled with permission to remain at Versailles. As the "*maîtresse tonnante et triumphante*," Madame de Montespan, the haughty and magnificent Mortemart, had bowed her head in the preceding reign before a simple curé, so did the omnipotent Marquise de Pompadour bend the knee and humbly solicit favors at the hands of a Jesuit. But Père de Sacy was obstinate; he refused to be moved by the profuse protestations of the marquise. In vain did she

point out to him that the communication between her apartments and the king's had been walled up; in vain did the advocates of easy morals and worldly piety argue with him that he ought not to discourage repentance; that too much harshness would spoil everything; that the Church needed Madame de Pompadour's assistance against the Encyclopedists, — in a word, that it was all right on occasion to strike a bargain with Heaven. The Jesuit declined to accept this theory of relaxation of discipline, and indefensible compromise. He reminded his would-be penitent that she had a husband who was still alive, a husband of whom she had no just cause to complain, and that her proper place was, not at the palace of Versailles, but at the fireside of M. Lenormand d'Étioles. The favorite was furious at this unpleasant reminder, and the conjugal phantom thus conjured up before her, which would upset all her plans.

When, in spite of all her woman's wiles, she was at last convinced that she could not hope to made any impression upon Père de Sacy, she dismissed him; and there can be no question that the admirable conduct of the Jesuit in this matter was one of the principal causes which led to the expulsion of his order from France some years later. Madame de Pompadour was very revengeful. She never forgave any one who was bold enough to offend her.

Does it seem possible? — the favorite carried her assurance so far as to represent herself as a victim! According to her story, obstacles were wilfully thrown in the way of her salvation and the king's. The priests who refused to

give her absolution were enemies of throne and altar alike. At the same time she was shamelessly soliciting an appointment as lady-in-waiting in the queen's household. Marie Leczinska's good-nature had already been stretched too far, and on this occasion the good queen made some strictures. To accept as the occupant of an honorable position a woman living apart from her husband, a person who could not even aspire to the privilege of partaking of general communion, was a humiliation to which Louis XV. certainly could not wish to subject the Queen of France. Madame de Pompadour, the adroit schemer, did not lose heart. She announced her desire to be reconciled with her husband, while she covertly warned M. Lenormand d'Étioles not to be tempted to accept such an offer. The letter which she wrote him (for general circulation) overflowed with fine sentiments. In the same proportion that she had scandalized society by leaving him, she proposed to edify it by living thenceforth on terms of closest union with her spouse. But this promise was only a false move. Besides, M. d'Étioles was very far from anxious to take his wife back. A line of a modern tragedy applies very well to his frame of mind: "Et mon indifférence a tué mon mépris" (and my indifference has slain my anger).

In fact, the woman who had ceased to bear his name, and whose desertion had formerly made him so unhappy, had long since ceased to arouse his anger or resentment. He had wept for Madame d'Étioles. But Madame d'Étioles had been dead for more than ten years, and he did not

know Madame la Marquise de Pompadour. We might add that he had not the slightest desire to make her acquaintance. What he heard about her did not tempt him in the least. He much preferred Mademoiselle Rem, a former dancer at the Opera, with whom he lived as her husband; and rather than leave that young woman, who after all was perhaps as estimable as his wife, he had refused to be French ambassador at Constantinople.

Again Madame de Pompadour gained her point. Her husband, she said, was the one at fault. He it was, and he alone, who was committing the sin, — he, who refused to open his arms to his repentant spouse; surely she could not force her way into her husband's domicile. The queen had no further fault to find with her, and there was no further obstacle to her elevation, after she had received absolution, to the post of lady-in-waiting, which was the height of her ambition. She partook of the sacrament in solemn form at Easter, in the Church of Saint-Louis, Versailles. But it was not Père de Sacy to whom she confessed her sins; another priest had that privilege.

"I was much surprised," says Madame du Hausset, "to see the Duchesse de Luynes, maid of honor, visit Madame secretly for some time. Later she came openly; and one evening Madame, after she was in bed, called me and said: 'My dear, you will be glad to hear that the queen has made me one of her ladies-in-waiting; I am to make my bow to her to-morrow, and you must make me look as lovely as possible.' I knew that the king was not so well pleased

as she, for he dreaded the scandal, and the inevitable belief that he had forced the appointment upon the queen. But it was not so at all. The queen was made to believe that it would be an act of heroism on her part to overlook the past; that all scandalous tongues would be silenced when Madame was seen to be retained at court by the duties of an honorable position, and that it would be the surest proof in the world that there was no longer any bond but friendship between her and the king.

"The queen received her very graciously. The piously minded flattered themselves that Madame would take them under her wing, and they zealously sang her praises for some time. I never saw Madame so nearly contented as she was at that moment. The good people came to her apartments without scruple, and did not forget their own interests when they saw an opportunity to advance them. The doctor (Quesnay) laughed at the changed condition of things, and made great sport at the expense of the pious folk. 'And yet,' I said to him, 'they are consistent, and it may be that they are honest.' 'Oh, yes,' he replied; 'but then they ought not to ask for anything.'"

It was on the 7th of February, 1756, that the Marquise de Pompadour who had had the *tabouret* and all the honors of a duchess since 1752, received her commission as lady-in-waiting. The next day she began her week of attendance upon the queen, at a State dinner, in a magnificent toilet.

D'Argenson, whose moral ideas are often of the strangest, could see nothing out of the way in all this. His atti-

tude was approving rather than critical. "Sunday evening," he wrote, "the Marquise de Pompadour was announced as lady-in-waiting, from which people judge that she is no longer the king's mistress. They say that she even begins to talk of religion and Molinism, and tries to make herself agreeable to the queen, as she used to do to the king. All the influence which we have seen her wielding during the three years since the king has bestowed his favor upon others is merely a reward for the sweet humility with which she has borne with her lover's faithlessness. It is precarious and perfunctory, or it may be said to proceed from a feeling of friendship, or liking, or gratitude, and from a benevolent disposition in which love has no part. But such rational sentiments have much force in a sensitive and well-intentioned heart like the king's."

There we have the whole moral code of the eighteenth century in a nutshell. What can we expect from a social condition in which even honorable men hold such language, and are so indulgent toward vice?

VIII.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR, AND DAMIENS' ASSAULT UPON THE KING.

IT was Madame de Pompadour's destiny to exist in a state of alarm. She had been felicitating herself for a year or more upon the adroit way in which she had carried by assault the post of lady-in-waiting, and she had dismissed her confessors, whom she thought no longer necessary to her, when an unforeseen occurrence came very near depriving her of all the ground she had won by dint of so great exertion.

On the 5th of January, 1757, about six o'clock in the evening, Louis XV. had just descended the little stairway leading from his apartments to a porch which opened upon the marble court, and was about to enter his carriage, when he was stabbed with a knife in the hand of one Damiens, who, whether from madness or fanaticism, had made up his mind, not to kill him, but to give him a warning.

The king believed that the wound was fatal. He was one of that numerous category of Christians who are religious only when they are ill. When they are in robust health, they say: "Oh, we shall have time enough to re-

pent!" But if danger threatens them they quake with fear, run to confession, and become saints for the time being, reserving the right to revert to their former vicious courses as soon as their health is restored. Whenever he believed that death was staring him in the face, Louis's speech was always worthy of the Very Christian king. At Metz he was sublime. At Versailles he was no less lofty in his tone. The noblest maxims flowed from his lips, and his heart was filled with most touching sentiments. He appointed his son lieutenant-general of the kingdom, and said to him, with deep emotion: "I bequeath to you a kingdom in sad disorder; I pray that you may govern it better than I have." All those who came near him were moved to tears of admiration. He was no longer the proprietor of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, he was the descendant of Saint Loüis.

At the moment he was attacked his first words were, "A priest!" Père Desmarets, Jesuit, his confessor, was not at Versailles at the time, and a priest of the Grand-Commun attended him. (This name was given to the ecclesiastics who acted as chaplains to those members of the king's household whose quarters were in the apartments called Grand-Commun.) Louis confessed to this priest, and again to Père Desmarets, who came back from Paris in hot haste.

The wound was only a trifling one. Although he might have slain him, Damiens had no such purpose. He had one large and one small blade attached to the same handle, and made use only of the small one. The doctors said that the

victim might go about his business the next day if it were any other than the king.

But Louis's imagination was easily set at work. When they probed the wound and assured him that it was not at all deep, he cried: "It is deeper than you think, for it goes to my heart." The Baron de Besenval says in his "Mémoires" that, at the very moment when the doctors had definitely made up their minds that there was not the least cause for anxiety, the king's alarm was so great that he thought he was dying, and he made the Abbé de Rochecour, chaplain of the district, give him absolution over and over again.

Louis the well-beloved had not yet become Louis the well-hated. According to Barbier there was universal consternation in Paris, and everybody was in deep distress. The archbishop's mandate for forty hours' prayers was sent to all the churches. Priests and monks, choked with emotion, could scarcely intone the *Domine salvum fac regem.*

Meanwhile what had become of Madame de Pompadour? She was still in her apartments in the palace of Versailles, but did not even dare to ask leave to see the wounded monarch. She knew that Louis, ill, was not the same man, and that he could become very religious in the twinkling of an eye. Remembering what had taken place at Metz, and the ignominious casting off of the Duchesse de Châteauroux, she was persuaded that she would have to go; and everybody else thought so, too.

"The people," says Madame du Hausset, "learned the

news of the murderous assault upon the king with the greatest dismay, and we could hear them, from Madame's room, shouting beneath the windows. There were riotous demonstrations, and Madame feared that the fate of Madame de Châteauroux was to be her own. Some of her friends came every moment to keep her posted; her apartments were, in fact, like a church which everybody thinks he has a right to enter. They came feigning friendly interest, but in reality to see what sort of a face she put upon it, and Madame was continually weeping and fainting. Doctor Quesnay never left her side, nor did I."

What was the position at this juncture of the three principal ministers, Comte d'Argenson (brother of the author of the "Mémoires"), minister of war, M. de Machault, keeper of the seals and minister of justice, and the Abbé de Bernis, who had been appointed minister of foreign affairs three days before the assault. The first-named was the sworn foe of the marquise, and seized what seemed a promising opportunity to take his revenge upon her. The second was much indebted to the favorite, but as he fancied that her influence was at an end, he came out against her, and saluted the rising sun of the dauphin. The Abbé de Bernis did not desert the patroness to whom he owed the portfolio which had just come into his hands. He wrote to M. de Choiseul a curious letter, in which the words "honor" and "virtue" are put to strange uses: "The king has been assassinated, and the court can see nothing in that terrible calamity but a favorable opportunity to get

rid of our good friend. All the wires are being pulled to influence the confessor. There is a clique here which is waiting for the administration of Extreme Unction, to try to increase its influence. Why must religion always be so far away from virtue? No one but fools and triflers can any longer be scandalized by our friend's life. It is a matter of common knowledge that for five years friendship has taken the place of any illicit connection. It is rank bigotry to go back into the past, because no fault can be found with the present connection, which is based upon the necessity which the king feels of having a tried and true friend to whom to open his heart, and who, when the ministers fail to agree, is the only rallying-point. Such ingratitude as I have beheld, my dear Comte; how hopelessly corrupt is the age we live in! It may be that there never has been much more virtue in the world, but there has been more honor."

The Comte d'Argenson and M. de Machault were not fond of each other, but were cordially united in their opposition to the marquise. Although the comte's conduct did not surprise Madame de Pompadour, who knew that he had detested her for a long while, the defection of Machault, who was her own creature, was a stunning blow. "And he was my friend!" she cried in her stupefaction.

Being left alone with M. de Machault, after his wound had been dressed, Louis enjoined him, as the favorite's friend, not to send her any formal order to go away, but to advise her personally to take that course. Thereupon the keeper of the seals went to the apartments of the

marquise. The interview between them lasted half an hour. The outcome was anxiously awaited, and the Abbé de Bernis had returned to find out what had taken place. But let us give the floor to Madame du Hausset, the trusty *femme de chambre.* Nothing is so interesting as the words of eye and ear witnesses.

"Madame rang; I went in, followed by the abbé. She was weeping. 'I have got to go, my dear Abbé,' said she. I made her take some orange-water in a silver goblet, for her teeth were chattering. Then she told me to call her equerry, and calmly gave him directions to put her house at Paris in order, and tell all her people to be ready to start, and her coachmen to be on hand. A few minutes later the Maréchale de Mirepoix came in. 'What is the meaning of all these trunks?' she cried; 'my people say that you are going away.' 'Alas, my dear friend! the master wishes me to go, so M. de Machault tells me.' 'And what does he advise?' asked the maréchale. 'That I should go at once.'

"Meanwhile I was undressing Madame all alone, as she wanted to be more at ease in her long chair.

"'He wants to be master,' said the maréchale, 'this keeper of the seals, and he is throwing you over; who quits the field loses the battle.'"

These words made the clever marquise reflect. Quesnay came in just then, and "in his monkeyfied way, having heard what was said, narrated the fable of a fox who, when dining out with other animals, induced one to believe that

his enemies were on his track, so as to frighten him off and get his part of the feast. I did not see Madame again until very late. She was calmer then."

However, it was by no means certain yet that the favorite would not finally be disgraced. Her implacable foe, Comte d'Argenson, seemed to be entirely in the confidence of the king, who gave him his keys to go and look for some private papers at Trianon. The comte's brother, the Marquis d'Argenson, wrote on the 15th of January, 1757, ten days after the Damiens incident: "It is true that since the attempt upon the king's life the marquise has not seen his Majesty for a single instant. She puts a bold face on this neglect; but little by little she is being deserted. She has not received a line from his Majesty, who seems to care no more for her. Meanwhile he sees his confessor, Père Desmarets, every day, and he has made many friendly and edifying overtures to the queen. All this portends a change at court. M. le Dauphin is sworn of the council, and is acquiring influence there."

The former minister of foreign affairs deceived himself. The day that those words were written the marquise saw Louis again, and resumed all her former power. The minister of war was soon to find it out. "The most essential faculty of a courtier," says the Baron de Besenval, "is that of forming an accurate opinion of events, and knowing how to take advantage of them. M. d'Argenson made his great mistake right here; he should have reflected that the king's baseless alarm would vanish as quickly as it had

come, and that he would be as prompt to resume his hold upon the sources of power as he had been to let it go. Such is the course of all weak minds. The minister overlooked this simple truth. In the first council which was held after the attack upon the king, M. d'Argenson suggested, the dauphin being in the chair, that the ministers should carry their portfolios to that prince, as lieutenant-general of the kingdom, until the king's health should be entirely restored. The result of this misstep was that the dauphin, who had very little ambition, bore the minister no good-will for his suggestion, and that the king, who was just convalescent, felt all his old antipathy to his son come back, so that he excluded him from taking part in political affairs, and never forgave M. d'Argenson for the devotion to him which he had exhibited on that occasion. When one proposes to be ungrateful, one should be more clever about it."

To quote M. de Besenval once more: "A mistress kept at a distance is not to be despised nevertheless, and love has its whims and changes, which press upon one another's heels as rapidly as freaks of fortune."

Madame de Pompadour remained at court. The minister of war and the keeper of the seals were sacrificed to her. She indulged in a scene of hysterical weeping before the king; one would have said that she was on the point of swooning. Madame du Hausset ran for some Hoffmann's drops. The king himself prepared the draught for her with sugar, and presented it to her in his most gracious

manner. She smiled at last, and kissed the hand of the gallant monarch, who had soothed her troubled heart.

Two days after, the Comte d'Argenson received this letter from the king: "Your services are no longer necessary to me; I command you to hand in your resignation as State secretary of war, to withdraw from all business connected therewith, and to retire to your estate of Ormes."

Affairs resumed their regular course. The advocate Barbier wrote in his journal, at the close of January, 1757: "The king is perfectly well again. Madame de Pompadour has not left Versailles. The king, a few days after his recovery, paid her a visit of a quarter of an hour; but since he has begun to hold council meetings as before, he has resumed his regular habitudes. He has hunted several times, and the little supper parties have begun again." The chronicler, often with a touch of cynicism in his remarks, concludes thus: "In spite of the strictures of ill-intentioned folk, it would be the greatest blessing that could possibly befall him and us, that is to say, all good citizens, if he could succeed in banishing all remembrance of a catastrophe which could never have been anticipated, and continue his customary dissipation."

We must also quote the words in which the Baron de Besenval concludes what he has to say on this incident: "And so, throughout this affair, M. d'Argenson has been ready to sacrifice the king to M. le Dauphin in order to prolong his own power. The king was willing to sacrifice

his mistress to public opinion, and to the superstitious terrors which beset his conscience. M. de Machault agreed to sacrifice Madame de Pompadour, his patroness, by giving her advice which was like to gratify the monarch. And in the end everything was sacrificed to love, as always has been and always will be the case."

In this connection the word "love" is not exact; he should have said "habit."

Once more the favorite had triumphed; but in achieving her victory, she conceived a mortal enmity against the Jesuits, who had so nearly accomplished her ruin. She began that underhand but bitter struggle against them which was destined to result, within a few years, in the suppression of their order. She had the hardihood to forward to the Pope, on the sly, a letter which contained a censure upon their conduct, and, incredible as it seems, an apology for her own.

This document, a copy of which was found among the papers of the Duc de Choiseul, is a veritable masterpiece of cynicism or of mock conscientiousness. It demonstrates an absolute lack of moral sense in the woman who conceived it, as well as an utter disregard of the most elementary principles of decency, and of the respect which even the unbelieving owe to religion.

This extraordinary document begins with these words: "At the beginning of 1752, having determined, for reasons which it is useless to detail, to retain no sentiments save gratitude and pure affection for the king, I announced

my resolution to his Majesty, begging him to consult the doctors of the Sorbonne, and to instruct his confessor to consult other authorities, as to the possibility of allowing me to remain with him, since he so desired, without being exposed to suspicion of a weakness which no longer existed in me."

Thus, if we believe Madame de Pompadour, she had become a pattern of chastity and Christian renunciation. She added: "Affairs remained as before, to all appearance, until 1755. At that time, after serious reflection upon the evil fortune which has pursued me even at the height of my prosperity, the certainty of never being made happy by worldly goods, since I had never lacked anything and yet had never succeeded in attaining happiness, and upon my indifference to the things which used to interest me most,— everything seemed to be drawing me on to believe that there was no real happiness, save in God alone.

"I applied to Père de Sacy as the man most deeply impressed with this truth. I laid bare my soul to him. He tested me secretly from September (1755) until the end of January, 1756. During that time he suggested to me to write a letter to my husband, of which I now have the draught, which he wrote himself. My husband refused to see me again."

The marquise then went on to complain to the Pontiff of Père de Sacy, who, she said, had fallen into the hands of schemers of all sorts, and was reprehensible for having refused to administer the sacrament to her so long as she

remained at court. She added, referring to the crime of Damiens: "The terrible 5th of January came, and was followed by intrigues similar to those of the preceding year. The king did all that he could to bring Père Desmarets to a true perception of religious duty. The same motives were at work upon him, and his response was to the same effect; and the king, who earnestly wished to fulfil his obligations as a Christian, was prevented from doing so, and soon fell back again into the same old errors, from which he might surely have been rescued if the attempt had been made in good faith."

This may not have been all hypocrisy. I am inclined to think that, notwithstanding her idolatrous attachment to the court, the favorite recognized the wretchedness and emptiness of the life. How many persons continue to lead vicious lives, although they are perfectly conscious that vice is destroying them! How many who are led astray by their passions confess to their own hearts that those very passions are killing them!

"O ambition!" cried Saint Bernard, "by what power or spell does it happen, that, although thou art the torment of every heart wherein thou takest root and maintainest thy sway, there is still no one whom thou dost not beguile, and who does not allow himself to be taken unaware by the flattering allurements which thou offerest to him. *O ambitio, quomodo omnes torquens omnibus places?*"

It would have been easy to reply to the Marquise de Pompadour that if the pomp and vanities of the world

afforded her so little satisfaction, she had only to withdraw from the court.

The Pope, however, was not moved by this ostentatious parade of Christian philosophy. He could not make up his mind to regard the mistress of Louis XV. as a penitent Magdalene, and, far from reproving the Jesuits who had refused to grant her absolution, he approved their conduct. The haughty favorite did not admit that she was beaten. She held her peace, but swore that she would have her revenge.

IX.

THE PARC-AUX-CERFS.

BETWEEN Louis XV. and the Marquise de Pompadour, there was no tie but habit. All pretence of love had vanished. In her the lover no longer existed; there remained only a woman of affairs, a manager, and, alas! that it must be said, a procuress. The most convincing proof that the favorite no longer loved her master is found in the fact that she was no longer jealous of him, except when her ambitious schemes were in danger of being thwarted. If he was guilty of infidelity to her with obscure women it troubled her not at all; but it exasperated her to have him cast an admiring eye upon a lady of rank.

The close union of the sexes, when it is neither ennobled by mutual passion nor distinguished by that selfish sentiment so characteristic of deep affection, jealousy, has ceased to be anything but shameful and degrading.

Madame de Pompadour indulged in no illusion as to a heart which she knew to be blasé and withered; not content with closing her eyes to Louis's *galanteries du passage*, she even assisted in consummating them. Her only thought was to cling to her official position, her situation as titular

mistress. Thus she demonstrated that the object of her affection — of her pretended affection, rather — was not Louis, but the king.

In reality Madame de Pompadour had all the characteristics of a prostitute, and it is a rule almost without exception that women of that class have no real affection for the men by whom they are supported. The money which one gives them, they accept with no more gratitude than the office-holder who signs a receipt for his month's pay. They look upon the sums they receive as allowances to which they are entitled, and in their unlimited conceit they fancy that they are never sufficiently paid; if by some extraordinary, miraculous chance it does happen to them to feel a sincere attachment for a man, it is sure to be for somebody who wastes no money upon them. Ye poor young men who gaze at the magnificent equipages of beautiful and brilliant courtesans rolling by, remember that these creatures have no love for the men who are ruining themselves for them. Beware of the sin of envy; debauchery brings its own reward. Love cannot be bought. True love, love worthy of the name, love with its sublime unselfishness, its confidence and faith, its earnestness and ecstacy, stands on a higher plane than mere wealth, and all the gold of the universe cannot purchase it for prince or peasant.

If we wish to understand Louis's relations with the marquise, we have but to read this passage of the "Mémoires" of Madame du Hausset: "Madame sent for me one day to come to her cabinet, where I found the king,

walking up and down with serious mien. 'You must go,' she said to me, 'and pass a few days in a house on Avenue de Saint-Cloud, to which I will have you taken. You will find there a young person about to be confined.'

"The king said not a word, and I was struck dumb with amazement.

"'You will be the mistress of the house, and will preside at the lying-in, like the goddess of the fable. You must be there to see that everything is done according to the king's wish, and with the utmost secrecy. You will be present at the christening, and give the names of the father and mother.'

"The king began to laugh, and said, 'The father is a very good fellow.'

"Madame added: 'Yes; beloved by all the world, and adored by those who know him best.'

"She then went to a little dressing-case, and took out a little box, which she opened; she took from it a diamond aigrette, saying to the king: 'I did not wish, and for a very good reason, that it should be any handsomer.'

"'It is too handsome as it is,' he replied, as he embraced Madame; 'how good you are!' She wept with emotion, and said, placing her hand upon the king's heart: 'There is where I wish to be enthroned.'

"The king's eyes were moist also, and I began to cry myself, without any clear idea what I was crying for."

A strange trio that, — Louis XV., the marquise, and Madame du Hausset! What a cynical touch the *femme de*

chambre gives to her narration of that shameful, ridiculous scene! What idiotic, degrading tears! Madame du Hausset might well ask herself why she wept. Such mawkish sentimentality, such burlesque emotion deserves no more than a scornful shrug of the shoulders.

Madame du Hausset considered that the obliging rôle assumed by Madame de Pompadour was — to use her own words — "that of a superior woman and an indulgent friend." She sometimes went on a secret mission to the little house in the Parc-aux-Cerfs, the scene of the master's hidden orgies, where the marquise herself would not deign to go, although all its secrets were familiar to her. The *femme de chambre*, whose scruples were not troublesome, naïvely tells in her "Mémoires" about going to dine with the creature irreverently called the Mother Abbess, as if it were the most natural and proper thing in the world. "That is the name," she adds, "which is given to her who has the direction of affairs at the Parc-aux-Cerfs."

Much has been written concerning that mansion of unsavory celebrity. It has been reserved for the learned custodian of the library of Versailles, M. Le Roy, by dint of much research, to locate the site of that abode of mystery, and to reduce to a certainty the proportions and real importance of that establishment, which has been made the subject of innumerable fables and exaggerated stories.

As M. Théophile Lavallée has said in his preface to M. Le Roy's book, "Curiosités Historiques," one is inclined, at the mention of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, to imagine a

sort of seraglio after the Oriental pattern, — an enormous garden, with concealed grottos, bosky groves, blooming lawns, enchanted kiosks, and a herd of hinds, of varying degrees of bashfulness, pursued by a wanton monarch.

"But this is all far from the reality. The famous house was not in a park at all. Its name comes from the fact that it was in a quarter of Versailles then called the Parc-aux-Cerfs, because it was built during the reign of Louis XIV. upon the site of a deer-park, dating from Louis XIII. This quarter included all the territory between Rue de Satory, Rue des Rossignols, and Rue Saint-Martin."

"Louis XV.," we read in the "Mémoires" of Madame Campan, "had adopted the curious plan of separating Louis de Bourbon from the king of France. Like any private individual he had his own personal fortune, and distinct financial interests. He appeared as an ordinary citizen in all his business transactions and bargains; he had purchased in the Parc-aux-Cerfs at Versailles a pretty little house, where he lodged one of those low-born mistresses whom the indulgence or the policy of Madame de Pompadour had tolerated, so that she might not forfeit her privileges as titular mistress."

That house, which wears an entirely different aspect to-day, was on the present location of No. 4 Rue Saint-Médéric, in a retired neighborhood, at the foot of a blind alley, far from all noise and the nuisance of passers-by. It was for these reasons that it was chosen as the theatre of these mysterious orgies.

"Tradition, as well as the testimony of several persons connected with the court," says the historian Lacretelle, "confirm but too fully the stories, shrouded in a mass of falsehood, relating to the Parc-aux-Cerfs. It is claimed that the king caused girls of nine or ten years to be brought up there, and the number of those who were taken there was enormous. They were furnished with a dowry and married off to men who were either vile or unsuspecting.

"The expenses of the Parc-aux-Cerfs were paid in cash, hence it is difficult to estimate them; but there can be no danger of exaggeration in saying that the establishment cost the State above a hundred millions. In some accounts it is put as high as a thousand millions."

These are wildly fantastic figures. M. Le Roy has reduced the thing to its proper proportions; the truth is bad enough, and there is no need to romance about it. In reality, the house was so small that there was ordinarily but one damsel sojourning there at one time, with the woman who had charge of her and the servant who waited upon them both.

"The house was apparently very small," we read in a note to the "Mémoires" of Madame du Hausset. "As a general rule there was only one young person there; the wife of a clerk in the war department acted as her companion, and took a hand at cards or embroidered with her. This person always passed the young woman off as her niece; she took her away during the king's excursions to the country."

Farther on, Madame du Hausset herself says: "There were never more than two, and frequently only one. When they married they received jewels and about a hundred thousand francs. Sometimes the Parc-aux-Cerfs had no tenant for six months in succession."

According to the Marquis d'Argenson, it was the daughter of a dealer in second-hand clothing and a cobbler — Murphy by name, not quite fifteen years old and very pretty — who was selected by Lebel, the king's *valet de chambre*, to open the new establishment. Louis bought the place in 1755; he kept it sixteen years, and sold it in 1771 only because Madame Du Barry, past mistress in the science of debauchery, took up all his attention at that time. M. Théophile Lavallée estimates the whole number of victims of the Parc-aux-Cerfs at about thirty. At that figure it was disgraceful enough. But if we believe the Puritans of the Revolution, whose morals were not always a pattern of decorum and austere self-control, we must reckon by thousands the young girls who were sacrificed to the licentious monarch.

The men of 1793 were forever talking about the Parc-aux-Cerfs. Alas! the innocent must atone for the sins of the guilty. It was left for Louis XVI. to expiate the debauched life of his predecessor.

X.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR, AND DOMESTIC POLITICS.

WITHIN as well as without, in the bickerings between Parliament and the clergy no less than in questions of foreign policy, Madame de Pompadour's ideas were always uncertain, incoherent, and shifty. It is, in truth, seldom that we find in a pretty woman the qualities requisite to conduct public affairs. With few exceptions, women of fashion are fickle, headstrong, easily excited, and capricious, like most people who are surrounded with flatterers. If they meddle with government, their half-knowledge is more dangerous than absolute ignorance. They have decided prejudices and have already taken sides; and their mania for assuming the airs of a patron makes them persist in taking under their protection favorites who are without merit. Their most important decisions often turn upon trifles. A well-turned compliment will have more effect upon them than a well-founded argument. They are easily duped by any one who has the address to flatter them without seeming to do so, and to find excuses more or less ingenious to justify their whims, and palliate their mistakes. Such was Madame de Pompadour.

Was it not a curious sight to see this vain woman leaving her baubles and gew-gaws to plunge into the most complicated questions of theology and the science of government, to pose as a mediator and judge between magistracy and clergy, between the crown and the altar?

"Surely," wrote the Marquis d'Argenson, in a style worthy of the epoch, "it is much better to see at the helm a fair nymph than a miserable, cringing ape like the late Cardinal de Fleury. But these beautiful dames are as capricious as white cats, who purr about your legs one moment, and bite and scratch you the next." Madame de Pompadour followed that course with the Parliament, — first she fawned upon it, and then turned and rent it.

The interminable strife between the secular jurisdiction and ecclesiastical discipline had all the relentless bitterness of a civil war. A society which was at once unbelieving and bigoted went mad over theological questions worthy of the deliberations of a Council of Byzantium; and at the very height of the Seven Years' War there were in Paris, as Voltaire remarked, fifty thousand ranters who could not tell you what countries the Danube or the Elbe flowed through, and who thought that the world was turned topsy-turvy by the contradictory propositions of the adepts of Jansenius and the disciples of Molina.*

After all, the question was more serious than one is inclined to think at first blush. Jansenism, "the third estate

* See the very full and learned work of M. Jobez, "La France sous Louis XV." 6 vols. Didier.

of religion," as it has been aptly called, was in effect only a preparatory step in the direction of republican doctrines. "Do not imagine," said Bossuet, speaking of the English Revolution (1688), "that it was a mere dispute about episcopacy, or quibbling about Anglican liturgy, which stirred the masses to action; those disputes were only the feeble beginnings by which the turbulent spirits in a measure tested the extent of their freedom. But something much more violent was stirring in their hearts; it was a secret hatred for all constituted authority, and an itching for endless innovations after they had taken a first taste."

Jansenism in France was characterized by the same sublime indifference to suffering, untamable curiosity, and the same revolutionary spirit which marked English Protestantism. Louis XIV., jealously guarding his royal prerogative, was not slow to perceive it. He felt that discipline was no less indispensable in the Church than in the barracks, and he understood that the throne was built upon the same foundation as the altar. The Bull *Unigenitus*, of 1713, was designed to re-establish unity of doctrine; and when the Jansenists refused to bow to the decree of the sovereign pontiff, the great king said to himself that that rebellion against the authority of the pope would prove to be the signal for attack upon monarchical principles. He was not mistaken. When Parliament showed itself favorable to Jansenism, it was not so much because of any particular opinions upon free-will or salvation as from an instinctive leaning toward the spirit of revolution, the germs

of which existed in the new sect. Religious controversy gradually led to political controversy. Parliament led the way to parliamentarism. They began by refusing to recognize the episcopal jurisdiction of an archbishop, to end by defying the authority of a king.

Christophe de Beaumont, priest with decided convictions, austere and unbending churchman, so strong in his contempt for the temptations of rank and title that Louis was obliged to summon him three times before he could induce him to leave his see of Vienne in Dauphiné to accept the archbishopric of Paris, — Christophe de Beaumont was faithful to the traditions of the Church when he denied that the Parliament of Paris was competent to deal with matters purely religious, such as the administration of the sacraments. His doctrine, after all, was only that of a separation of the two powers. Louis inclined toward the doctrines of the archbishop, whose virtue he knew and appreciated. Like Louis XIV. he recognized the authority of the Bull *Unigenitus*, and treated Jansenism as heresy. Like Louis XIV. he distrusted, not without good reason, the Parliament and populace of Paris.

"I know the people of Paris," he said; "they must have remonstrances and shows, and some day perhaps something worse than that." Madame de Pompadour would have done as the king wished to do, and have espoused the cause of the archbishop, if the archbishop had been a courtier; but Christophe de Beaumont would have died rather than connive at concubinage and adultery. He

could not conceive of such a thing as a churchman bending the knee to a royal favorite, and the bare idea of soliciting favors from a Pompadour would have brought a flush of shame to his brow. He would have preferred exile twice over.

"The queen," wrote the Marquis d'Argenson in December, 1754, "as well as Mgr. le Dauphin and the whole royal family, are deeply grieved by the banishment of the archbishop of Paris; the queen weeps over it every day."

Christophe de Beaumont, in his exile at Conflans, received crowds of visitors. The true believers looked upon him as the bulwark of the faith.

The following lines were written on the subject of the archbishop of Paris:—

"Qu'êtes-vous allés voir? Est-ce un faible roseau
Flexible à tous les vents d'un orage nouveau?
C'est un chêne puissant dont la superbe tête
S'élève jusqu'aux cieux et brave la tempête;
Un rocher au milieu de la mer isolé,
Battu de mille flots sans être ébranlé;
Un pontife, un pasteur dont la noble constance,
De lui ravir ses droits fait perdre l'espérance.
Malgré lui, de la barque il prit le gouvernail.
Tout le fit admirer: vertu, zèle, travail.
Faut-il que des enfants, oubliant qu'il est père,
Contre lui de son prince excitent la colère!
Il respecte ses droits, ne craignant rien pour lui,
Il tremble pour la foi dont son bras est l'appui.
Peut-on ne pas trembler dans la barque qui flotte?
Je n'entends dans les airs que ces lugubres sons:
Sauvez-nous du danger, Seigneur, nous périssons.
Chrétiens, rassurez-vous, Beaumont est le pilote."

The king admired the archbishop, but did not sustain him. D'Argenson wrote on the 6th of March, 1756: "The personal government of Louis XV. might well adopt the device, — *Dividatur*. It is a method of doing business which he learned from Cardinal de Fleury. All his strength is directed to that end. Thus it is that while he does only about half right, he does only about half wrong, which produces chaos and other deplorable results."

By this system the monarch failed to satisfy either magistrates or clergy. First he exiled the Parliament, then the archbishop. The curés continued to refuse to administer the sacraments to Jansenists. The magistrates sent their bailiffs, and the sick people partook of communion under the protection of bayonets. The Eucharist became an object of derision through the strife of faction. The court wavered between the two sides; after having sent the archbishop of Paris to Conflans, Louis, leaving him in disgrace, gave judgment in his favor.

In a bed of justice held on the 13th of December, 1756, the king forbade Parliament to decree that the sacraments should be administered, or that a general assembly should be convened, or that the course of justice should be interfered with, or the registration of edicts suspended. He suppressed the Chambers of Inquiry (*Enquêtes*) and announced that whoever did not obey would be punished.

One hundred and fifty members of Parliament resigned. All Paris was in commotion. An *émeute* was thought to be imminent. Curses and anathemas were heard on all

sides. The diatribes of the Jansenists and the parliamentary faction served to excite Damiens to the madness of fanaticism. He believed that in striking down Louis XV. he was acting for the service of God and the good of the people.

Madame de Pompadour, even more fickle than the king, was at odds with the Parliament at this time. Nevertheless, the archbishop remained in exile because he would not, at any price, bend his knee to the favorite. The mandate which he sent from Conflans to Paris offended the marquise deeply.

"Let us search our hearts, dear brethren," he said, "and see if the errors of our minds and hearts have not merited this terrible demonstration of the wrath of God. Let us inquire, without prejudice, what is the meet reward for the false doctrines with which men's minds are filled, — such license in speech, such blasphemy against God and his Christ, such wicked arguments against revealed truth, such scandalous conduct among all sorts and conditions of men; let us notice especially whether, since the degeneration of faith among us, there has not crept into men's minds and their writings a multitude of principles of thought which lead to disobedience and even to rebellion against the king and his laws. It would be easy for us to remind you of the maxims of the blessed teachers, who never cease to inculcate a true sense of the fidelity which is due to the princes of the earth; the decisions of the councils, which have called down the curse of Heaven upon every doctrine

tending to incite nations to rebellion against their sovereigns; and the continued teaching of the spiritual pastors, who have always said with the great apostle: 'Obey in all things your temporal masters.' What ought we to think of the execrable crime which was conceived in the heart of our country and perpetrated under our eyes? What should be our righteous anger at the thought of so foul an attempt treasonably committed with deliberate premeditation, and in the very palace, where everything proclaims the majesty of our sovereign lord?"

This saintly language aroused the admiration of the queen and dauphin and all pious people. But it seemed a satire to the protecting genius of the philosophers, the friend of Voltaire and Quesnay, the patroness of the Encyclopedists.

Louis XV. at heart agreed with the archbishop. He recalled him in October, 1757. But always true to his system of counterpoises, he permitted the resigning members of Parliament to resume their duties. The archbishop, unrelentingly pursued by the ill-will of the favorite, was exiled a second time from January, 1758, to October, 1759. The inflexible prelate would never yield a jot in the matter of doctrine. "Let them prepare a scaffold in the sight of all the court," he cried; "I will gladly mount it to maintain my rights, fulfil my duties, and obey the dictates of my conscience."

The disputes concerning the Bull *Unigenitus* were at last adjusted; but religious authority was weakened at the

same time and in the same degree as the power of the throne. Emboldened by their polemical writers, the members of the Parliament of Paris gradually set themselves up as guardians of the public liberties and critics of absolute monarchy. Some nobles, D'Argenson, for example, and Choiseul, and other disciples of Voltaire, fondly fancied that the aristocracy might retain its privileges if the clergy lost theirs. Louis XV., catching a glimpse of the cataclysm of the future, had no such illusion; he was, in the depths of his soul, the foe of Parliament and the friend of the Church. If the Very Christian king seemed sometimes to deal gently with the philosophers, it was only because they toadied to his mistress, and sought to lighten his own burden by lulling his remorse to sleep.

XI.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR, AND THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR.

ONE of the principal calamities laid at the door of Madame de Pompadour by her contemporaries and by posterity, is the Seven Years' War. The attempt has been made to make her responsible for all the bloodshed, all the disaster and humiliation, the fateful days of Rosbach and Crevelt, the loss of our colonies, and the deadly blow struck at the military prestige and naval power of France.

In our opinion, this picture is much overdrawn. We must not forget that the real beginning of the Seven Years' War was an unjustifiable act of oppression on the part of England, who was determined to carry things with a high hand upon the ocean, at any price. Madame de Pompadour certainly was not responsible for British ambition. It is true that France was not prepared for the struggle, and that her navy had been allowed to fall into decadence. But even if the favorite was in error as to the resources of the country, and cherished delusions which led to the destruction of nations as well as individuals, she was not the only one.

The Marquis d'Argenson reproaches her for being engrossed with porcelain when she should have been thinking about preparing for war. "Madame de Pompadour," he wrote in 1754, "does nothing but prate about what a great thing it is for the State to manufacture porcelain in the Saxon fashion, and perhaps even to improve on the original. A royal factory for the production of porcelain has been established on Rue de la Monnaie; and a service is on exhibition there which the king is sending to the king of Saxony, as if to taunt him by claiming to have produced better wares than his. At the king's supper-parties the marquise says that no one is a good citizen who does not buy that porcelain as long as his funds hold out.)

"Some one retorted, 'But while the king has shown so liberal a spirit in encouraging this industry, the factories at Charleville and Saint-Étienne are abandoned, which were useful in a far different way when the defence of the kingdom was involved; and three fourths of the workmen have gone to other countries.'"

The reflection is very pertinent, no doubt; but a few Saxon or Sèvres porcelains more or less would have made a very trifling difference in the situation of France. Her great misfortune was that she lay buried in direful repose. Voltaire has said: "Europe has rarely seen a more cloudless sky than that under which all the powers lived from the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748, up to the year 1755. Commerce flourished from St. Petersburg to Cadiz; the fine arts were cultivated everywhere; there was friendly

correspondence between all the nations; and Europe was like one great family, whose members had accommodated all their disputes."

The French people allowed themselves to be lulled into a state of false security by this apparent tranquillity. Soldiers and statesmen felt an overweening confidence in the stability of the *status quo*. Men had become so accustomed to peace in a few years that they no longer remembered that there was such a thing as war. It was the same thing which happened to us about a century later at the time of the Universal Exposition of 1867. Peoples who wish to maintain their greatness ought to distrust the theories of cosmopolites. While the philosophers were dreaming their humanitarian dreams, England was preparing her fleets, and Frederick the Great his armies.

A trifling dispute between France and England concerning some wild territory in Canada was the signal for the conflagration which eventually involved the four quarters of the globe. But this quarrel, insignificant in itself, was not the real cause of the war; it was at most a pretext.

To avoid trying conclusions with England was well-nigh impossible; but what France might have done, and did not do, was to hold firm to the Prussian alliance, instead of plunging into an alliance which was diametrically opposed to all the traditions of her foreign policy, — the alliance with Austria.

The essential element always lacking in the diplomacy of Louis XV. was steadiness of purpose. The fickle-minded

monarch did not himself know what he wanted. To-day inclined to Prussia, to-morrow to Austria, he wavered between contradictory systems. The policy of counterpoises only deludes for a moment; it may be successful for a short time, but almost invariably ends in disaster. To persevere in one direction, follow one object, select an advantageous alliance and stick to it,—therein lies the secret of a strong policy. A weak policy, on the other hand, always tends to undo to-morrow what was done yesterday. It is like Penelope's web.

The careful student of our failures, under Napoleon no less than under the Bourbons, is soon convinced that nine tenths of them are due to lack of cohesion of principle, and constant change of plan. True strength consists in abiding by one system and following one plan. The strength of Prince Bismarck lies in his having unwaveringly persevered in one great idea, that of a unified Germany, and having remained faithful to one alliance, the Russian.

The policy which led to the Treaty of Versailles of 1756, whereby Louis XV. and Maria Theresa entered into a close union, was not of itself a more objectionable policy than another. But if it was proposed to adopt such a policy, it was very injudicious to make war on Austria in the first place; for nothing is more hazardous than to put one's self directly at odds with one's previous course. By such instability of conduct one fails utterly to inspire confidence, and places himself at the mercy of every wind that blows.

In politics, as in religion and literature, unity is the most essential quality. It is the same with diplomacy as with literary style, —

> "Ce que l'on conçoit bien s'énonce clairement,
> Et les mots pour le dire arrivent aisément."

There must be a truly methodical mind, a well-defined, and precise object, fully determined on, — no tortuous paths, but straight lines. The old maxim *diviser pour régner* (to reign by division of power), the presence in the same ministry of men who are always at odds with one another, secret agents who undo the work of official agents, subterranean intrigues, mines and countermines, double-faced policy, — all these are not symptoms of strength, but are the expedients resorted to to hide fatal weakness. Backstairs diplomacy, like that of Louis XV., is suitable only for a government which is at its last gasp. Wretched the lot of the sovereign who distrusts his own ambassadors! If he has not full confidence in them let him change them.

The habit of dissimulation, and a sort of pride in being considered impenetrable, were marked characteristics of Louis XV. It was he, not Madame de Pompadour, who created a secret government which was constantly at war with his principal servants. As for the Austrian alliance, the favorite was not responsible for that either.

Louis was by no means in love with Frederick, and was quite as susceptible to the flattering overtures of Maria Theresa as Madame de Pompadour herself. If that clever

sovereign did write the marquise a letter in which she made herself out her dearest friend, she took pains at the same time to affect passionate admiration, a sort of adoration in fact, for Louis XV.

And then, too, there was an Austrian faction at Versailles. The Marquis d'Argenson wrote in January, 1756: "There is a large party at our court devoted to the court of Vienna. Austria has always had emissaries at our court. I hear them say now that the house of Austria of to-day is by no means what it used to be, that it has need of our friendship, and that we ought to be on terms of intimate alliance. I am very familiar with their insinuating speeches, and I owe my disgrace of 1747 to my bitter opposition to similar ideas. They preach to us against the king of Prussia, they say that he is all for England, and they try to excite us against him, with the purpose of ruining him, if we can do it. Thus we are sulking with Spain, working ourselves into a frenzy against Prussia, our natural and sincere ally, and all these feelings are being spurred on at court *femineo ululatu*."

The defenders of the Treaty of Versailles (May 1, 1756) by which France and Austria entered into an offensive and defensive alliance, are entitled to a statement of the extenuating circumstances. We must not overlook this passage of Duclos: "As soon as the treaty was known there was an outbreak of delirious joy, which was increased by the evident disgust of the English; every one fancied that the union of the two leading powers would keep

all Europe respectfully in check. Opinions have changed considerably since then."

The Abbé de Bernis, who had given up the Venetian embassy to accept the portfolio of foreign affairs, and who was one of Madame de Pompadour's favorites, was entrusted with the drawing up of the treaty. "In spite of his instinctive objections as a man of common-sense, he did not hold out long against the general movement which drew everybody along with it; he was dazzled, and thought it was his good fortune to have a hand in the greatest political operation which had been attempted since Richelieu. At first everything seemed to succeed to admiration, and the new alliance, so extolled at court, was very well received by the public." *

The marquise was in high feather. She amused herself by having engraved upon an agate an allegory which represented France and Austria joining hands upon the altar of Fidelity, and trampling under foot the mask of Hypocrisy and the torch of Discord.

At the outset there was no lack of energy or confidence. The conqueror of Port Mahon (Richelieu) was found to be as lucky in war as in love. The nation dreamed of naught but glorious exploits and conquests. But soon the sky grew dark. The convention of Closter-Seven, so foolishly signed by Maréchal de Richelieu on the 8th of September, 1757, was the signal for disaster upon disaster.

"Surely people do not die of grief," wrote Bernis to Choiseul on the 13th of December of the same year, "for

* Sainte-Beuve, "Causeries du lundi."

I have not died since the 8th of September. Mistakes have been heaped upon one another since that unlucky day, in such fashion that they can hardly be accounted for except on the supposition of evil design. I have prayed to God and his saints with all my strength. I succeed in quickening my pulses a little, and then the lethargy steals upon me again; I stare gloomily about me, and all is said. I seem to be the minister of foreign affairs in limbo. Try, my dear Comte, if you can succeed any better than I in arousing the vital spark which is fast going out among us; for my own part, I have dealt all my heavy blows, and I propose, as others have done, to have an apoplectic fit,— never ceasing, however, to do my duty as a good citizen and a man of honor."

The former court abbé, transformed into a minister, — this once superficial creature, whom Voltaire used sneeringly to call *Babet la bouquetière*, — waxed exceeding wroth over the general apathy and heedlessness. "There has never been an instance," wrote this friend of Madame de Pompadour, "of so great a game as this being played as indifferently as one would play a game of quadrille. As a man of feeling and, if I may say so, a man of sense, I am dying upon the rack, and my martyrdom is of no use to the State. May God vouchsafe to send us a will of some sort, or some one who has one! I will be his *valet de chambre*, if you please, with all my heart."

From the very beginning of the struggle, devoted France was stupefied at the delusions in which she had indulged. The truth appeared at last. Bernis understood that the

briefest periods of madness do the least harm. On the 6th of January, 1758, he wrote to Choiseul, then ambassador at Vienna: "My advice would be to conclude peace, and to begin by a truce on sea and land. As soon as I find out what the king thinks of this idea, which is not in accordance with my usual way of thinking but is forced upon me by common-sense, reason, and necessity, I will let you know; meanwhile, try to impress upon M. de Kaunitz two things which are equally true: that the king will never abandon the empress, but that he must not destroy himself with her. Our respective blunders have brought sure ruin and destruction upon a magnificent scheme, which, in the early days of September, was sure of success. It is a beautiful dream, which it will be extremely dangerous to indulge in any longer, but which we may find it possible to resume some day with better actors and more skilfully combined military plans. The more my immediate responsibility for this great alliance is considered, the more ought I to be listened to when I advise peace."

Unfortunately, Madame de Pompadour had an abundant supply of pigheadedness, which is one of the attributes of a moderate intellect. Confounding heroism with obstinacy, she thought that it betokened a great soul to struggle on indefinitely against ill-luck. The more blunders that a general of her choosing committed, the more obstinately did she devote herself to sustaining him. She was like those gamblers who never yield to a run of hard luck, and cease playing only when they are ruined.

Public opinion severely condemned that headstrong obstinacy. The French did not know how to tolerate defeat. They showered sarcasms upon Soubise, the vanquished of Rosbach, and conceived a sort of infatuation for the conqueror. They got into the habit of exalting Frederick the Great to the skies, and heaping curses upon his bitter foe, Madame de Pompadour, — "Cotillon IV.," as he called her.

Soubise, however, was the scapegoat, upon whose head were poured all the puns and chansons and satires: —

"Soubise dit, la lanterne à la main,
J'ai beau chercher, où diable est mon armée?
Elle était là pourtant hier matin,
Me l'a-t-on prise ou l'aurais-je égarée?
Ah! je perds tout, je suis un étourdi;
Mais attendons au grand jour, à midi.
Que vois-je? O ciel! Que mon âme est ravie!
Prodige heureux, la voilà, la voilà!
Ah, ventrebleu! Qu'est-ce donc que cela?
Je me trompais, c'est l'armée ennemie."

But France was not to be raised from the dust by chansons. She played the enemy's game by showing herself more Prussian than Prussia herself. Bernis felt himself sinking beneath the flood of criticism and savage attacks.

"They threaten in anonymous letters," he wrote to Choiseul in 1758, "that I shall soon be torn in pieces by the populace; and, although I am little alarmed by such threats, it is certain that they might very well be made easy

of execution by the disasters which can be felt in the air. Our fair friend runs at least as much risk as I."

Sick in body and mind, Bernis could hold out no longer; he resigned his office. Louis accepted his resignation in a letter of the 9th of October, 1758, which began thus: "I am very sorry, Monsieur l'Abbé-Comte, that the business of the department which I put in your charge has affected your health to such a degree that you are no longer able to bear the burden of the necessary labor. I consent, with much regret, that you may turn over the department of foreign affairs to the Duc de Choiseul, who is, in my judgment, the only person at this moment suited for the place, as I do not wish to change the system which I have adopted, nor even that such a thing should be suggested to me."

The three women who were banded together against Frederick — Maria Theresa, empress of Austria; Elizabeth, empress of Russia; and the Marquise de Pompadour — continued the war with vigor. France experienced nothing but disaster in the four quarters of the globe. As Voltaire remarked, she seemed at this time to be drained dryer of men and money in her union with Austria than she had seemed to be after two hundred years of fighting against her.*

We must admit, however, that Madame de Pompadour's relentless determination came very near achieving success for an instant. We may well believe that the king of

* Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XV."

Prussia, who stood alone on the Continent against the combined forces of Austria, Russia, France, Sweden, and half of the empire, could not long have maintained so colossal and unequal a struggle. An unforeseen occurrence, the death of the empress of Russia (January 6, 1762), was his salvation.

Madame de Pompadour felt that her vengeance was slipping away from her. It was necessary to renounce all hopes of glorious conquest, to submit to national humiliation, and to execute the disastrous treaties of Paris and Hubertsbourg (February 10 and 15, 1763).

Louis XV. gave up the cities which he still possessed in Germany. He restored Minorca to England, and ceded to her Acadia, Canada, Cape Breton, the Gulf and River St. Lawrence, Grenada, Saint Vincent, Dominique, Tobago, and the Senegal River with its settlements. He recovered his Indian colonies only on condition that he would not fortify them, and would leave them ungarrisoned. Finally, he agreed anew to demolish the fortifications of Dunkirk. The utter destruction of military prestige, commerce, navy, and public credit; the loss of two hundred thousand men, of several hundred millions of money, and of almost all our colonies,— such was the final balance-sheet of this war which the marquise was so anxious to begin.

Well might Voltaire cry: "What was the result of that endless succession of battles, the mere recital of which today is a bore to those who made their mark in them? What remains as the fruit of those Herculean efforts? Nothing

but rivers of blood, shed to no purpose in wild and desolate regions, villages demolished, whole families reduced to beggary; and yet even the lightest whisper of these calamities rarely reaches so far as Paris, always deeply engrossed with its amusements, or with disputes of as little consequence."

Again, going back to the cause, or rather the pretext, of the conflict, the author of the "Siècle de Louis XV." says: "One would think that all these disasters might easily have been avoided by coming to an amicable arrangement with England about a little piece of disputed territory in Canada. But certain ambitious individuals, in order to put themselves forward, and make themselves necessary, hurried France into this fatal war. It was 1741 over again. The selfish vanity of two or three persons was enough to bring woe upon all Europe. France was in such need of peace that she looked upon those who brought it about as benefactors of their country."

The Duc de Choiseul, who had somewhat lessened the painful impression caused by continual reverses, by concluding (August, 1761) the "family pact" between the Bourbons of France, Spain, and Italy, and who was clever enough to gain the support of the fashionable literary men, the arbiters of renown, — the Duc de Choiseul retained his popularity. But his friend Madame de Pompadour was the target for the vindictive shafts of the public. Wounded in her ambition, her self-esteem, and her pride, she was not to be comforted.

XII.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR, AND THE PHILOSOPHERS.

IT happened one day that somebody mentioned in Louis's presence the custom of Frederick the Great to welcome among his intimates the philosophers of the day and famous men of letters.

"It is not the custom in France," said the king; "and as there are a few more fine intellects and great nobles here than in Prussia, I should need an enormous table to hold them all." Then he counted on his fingers: "Maupertuis, Fontenelle, La Motte, Voltaire, Piron, Destouches, Montesquieu, Cardinal de Polignac." Some one reminded him that he had forgotten D'Alembert and Clairaut. "Yes, and Crébillon," he said, "and La Chaussée!" "And Crébillon fils," cried some one; "and then there is the Abbé Prévost, and the Abbé d'Olivet." "Oh, well!" rejoined Louis, "during the last twenty-five years all those would have dined or supped with me."

Madame de Pompadour, who thoroughly understood the master's temperament, would not have made advances to the philosophers if she had not been carried beyond herself by her inordinate thirst for flattery.

But how resist compliments so deftly turned as those of Voltaire, — the same man who cried, when speaking of the Christian religion, "Let us stamp out the filthy thing!" who bent the knee to a royal mistress while he stretched inane sycophancy to its utmost limits. The censer, whose use in the churches he aimed to do away with, he laid hold of to wave it respectfully before the alcove of a Pompadour!

The marquise had in her circle of intimate friends a man who never left her; he was her familiar, her chum, her confidential adviser, her physician, — Doctor Quesnay, whom she had provided with lodgings above her own, in an *entresol* of the palace of Versailles. This little *entresol*, rendezvous of innovators the most audacious, free-thinkers the most out-spoken, and materialists the most enthusiastic, was the secret hatching-place of the Revolution that was to be, — the laboratory of chaos and destruction.

There might be seen, talking, dining, speech-making, and conspiring together, such men as D'Alembert, chief of the Encyclopedists, Duclos, who said of the great nobles who fawned upon him, "They fear us as a thief fears the light," — Helvetius, too, whose whole doctrine was summed up in that horrifying maxim, the apotheosis of egoism and immorality: "Man, being only a sentient creature, should have but one aim in life, the gratification of the senses." Marmontel relates how the Marquise de Pompadour, as she could not afford to have that troop of philosophers come down into her salon, used to join them as they sat at table, and talk with them.

Doctor Quesnay, her physician, was one of those Danubian peasants, or as MM. de Goncourt aptly express it, "one of those courtiers of the Danube," who conceal a most subtle talent under a rough exterior, and who live off monarchy, playing all the while at being republicans. Strange Brutuses they! — contraband Catos, whose fine maxims can impose upon none but simpletons; democrats, rough to look at, but pliant in reality, who take pride in eating the good dinners of the great men of this earth, and whose *soi-disant* dignity makes one smile!

Quesnay, the physical confessor, knew the strong and weak points of the marquise. He knew so well how to manage her that he was able coolly to furnish quarters in his *entresol*, directly over the favorite's apartments, to the first club, — the one which first agitated the subject of the overthrow of the Church and the throne.

Madame de Pompadour had no end of coquetry and affability to bestow upon the most dangerous foes of the old régime. The pastel of La Tour, now in the Louvre, shows her to us, seated upon a couch, with her left arm leaning upon a table, on which are a sphere and various books. The largest of all is the fourth volume of the "Encyclopédie," that great arsenal of impiety, the prospectus of which was issued by Diderot in November, 1750.

Louis XV., always hesitating, tolerated this mammoth collection at first. Some years later he revoked the license of the publishers (March, 1759). At the same time appeared a royal edict of unexampled ferocity against the

authors, printers, booksellers, and peddlers of all writings containing outrages upon religion and the royal authority. The death penalty appeared in almost every line. But a thousand ways were found of evading these Draconian laws, and the authorities kept their eyes closed most of the time. Voltaire, in his enthusiasm, cried, "Long live the ministry of the Duc de Choiseul!"

However, the favorite received sufficient warning. She perceived, as clearly as Louis, the dangers with which the doctrines of the "Encyclopédie" encompassed all crowned heads. Madame du Hausset narrates that a very curious anonymous letter was sent to the king and his mistress one day. As the author did not propose that it should fail to reach its destination, he sent a sealed copy to the lieutenant of police, with this superscription: "For the King;" another with these words, "To Madame de Pompadour," and a third to M. de Marigny.

This letter, which disturbed Louis and his marquise a good deal, was the more serious in its effect upon them as it was couched in very respectful language. Among other remarkable passages, it contained the following prediction: "The Encyclopedists, under the pretence of enlightening mankind, are striking at the very foundations of religion. Every variety of liberty is ready; the philosophers and Protestants incline towards republicanism, as do the Jansenists. The philosophers assail the trunk of the tree, the others some of the branches; but their efforts, although not taken in concert, will bring it to the ground some day.

Add to these the economists, whose object is political liberty, as the others aim at freedom of worship, and the government is likely to find itself, within twenty or thirty years, undermined in all its parts, and to fall with a fearful crash."

The prophecies of the revolution which was impending were repeated again and again by the pen of one of Louis's ministers, the Marquis d'Argenson. He it was who wrote in January, 1750: "Republicanism is gaining ground every day in philosophical minds. It is manifest that they hate the thought of monarchism. In fact, none but slaves and eunuchs bring their mock wisdom to the aid of monarchism. Again, on the 20th of December of the same year: "See how many philosophical writers there are to-day. The wind blows from England upon these matters, and they are very combustible. Observe the tone of the remonstrances of the Parliaments. These parliamentary officials and State syndics will become great men at need. The whole nation will take fire; the nobility will join with the clergy, then the third estate. And if it should result in the necessity of summoning the States-general of the kingdom to arrange for loans, the States would not come together in vain. Let us take heed, for all this is very serious indeed."

We must admit that D'Argenson was a true prophet. He repeated his dismal forebodings with renewed force every day. Under date of September 11, 1751, he writes: "We have no Visigoths or Saracens to overrun us, as the Romans had; but our government may come to know what

revolution means. We must remember that it no longer commands esteem or deference, and, what is worse yet, that it is doing its best to compass its own destruction. Clergy, troops, Parliament, the people, high and low, — all are grumbling, and becoming disaffected to the government, and quite justly, too. Matters are going from bad to worse."

He returns to the charge on the 9th of September, 1752: "The wretched results of our form of government, an absolute monarchy, have succeeded in convincing France, and all Europe as well, that it is the worst of all possible governments. A mild prince, without energy, allows the abuses inaugurated by the arrogance of Louis XIV. to grow in strength; there is no reform when reform is necessary, no amelioration; officials are selected without knowledge of their qualities, and prejudices are allowed to rule without investigation; everything is drawing us nearer and nearer to national disaster. Everything is torn to tatters, and private passions are working underground to our ruin and annihilation."

Is it not a curious thing thus to hear, forty years in advance, the first mutterings of the fearful tempest which will eventually engulf everything, — nobility, clergy, Parliaments, and monarchy itself?

It is the year 1750. The archers of the guard have arrested, by order of the police, certain young vagabonds who were begging in the streets of Paris. All at once it is rumored that these arrests are becoming much more com-

mon, and that no family is safe from them. The popular imagination loses control of itself, and rises to an intense height of passion. They say that, in order to restore his exhausted manhood, the debauched sovereign bathes in the blood of these children, like a new Herod. Madame de Pompadour, who is so imprudent as to visit Paris, has barely time to escape being torn to pieces. The people talk of going to Versailles to burn the palace, built, they say, at their expense. The king, in his anger, declares that he will never again go through Paris on his way to Compiègne. "What!" he cries, "shall I show my face to that wretched mob who call me Herod?" And in order to avoid the necessity of stepping foot in the capital, which he loathed the sight of, he caused a new road to be built around the walls, — a road which is to-day called *La Chemin de la Révolte.*

The flood of popular indignation rose higher and ever higher against the favorite; she was overwhelmed with maledictions, and they called her the king's *coquine.* Louis's daughters called her by a still more contemptuous name.

In November, 1751, the dauphin and dauphine on their way to Notre Dame passed over the Pont de la Tournelle. Their carriage was surrounded by several thousand women. "We are starving to death," they cried; "bread, bread!" The dauphine trembled like a leaf while the dauphin threw some gold among them.

"Monseigneur," said the women, "we don't want your money; it is bread that we need. We love you dearly.

Let them send away that wretched creature who governs the kingdom, and is guiding it to perdition! If we could get hold of her there would soon be nothing but small pieces left."

Such being the state of popular feeling before the Seven Years' War, we can imagine what it was likely to be after the national humiliation which that struggle brought upon ill-fated France.

Madame de Pompadour sought to find a remedy for the extraordinary unpopularity which dogged her steps, by paying more and more court to the philosophers, who were able to sound the trumpets of fame in her favor. These strangely constituted patriots, who had sung of the glorious victory of the conqueror of Rosbach as if he were a Titus or Marcus Aurelius, asked for only one thing to comfort them for the grief and shame and misery of their country; that one thing was a regularly instituted persecution of the Jesuits.

Upon this ground Madame de Pompadour was quite ready to follow the disciples of Voltaire. She might have hesitated if the Jesuits had been among her flatterers, or had pretended to be cajoled by her, — if they had been able to make up their minds to play a rôle of complaisance in the comedy of her sham repentance, or had seemed to see in her another Maintenon, — a mother of the Church.

But she did not forget that, in 1756, when she was obliged to go to confession, as a necessary preliminary to her appointment as lady-in-waiting, Père de Sacy had refused to give her absolution; that at the time Damiens

struck his blow in 1757, Père Desmarets had been within a hair's breadth of forcing her to leave the court. Therefore the Jesuits were doomed. On the 22d of February, 1764, a decree of Parliament ordered that within a week they should take an oath to renounce the authority of their society, should abjure its inhibited precepts, and carry on no correspondence with their former chiefs.

"When the Jesuits were driven away," says Chateaubriand, "their presence had ceased to be dangerous to the State. The past was punished in the present, as often happens among men. The 'Lettres Provinciales' (Pascal) had deprived the Society of Jesus of all moral power. And yet, Pascal was nothing more than a calumniator of genius; he has left us an immortal lie."

The great crime of the Jesuits was their failure to please the Marquise de Pompadour. The sad spectacle was exhibited of saint-like missionaries, unwearying apostles, illustrious teachers, men who had shed lustre upon religion and science, old men honored by the esteem of all honorable people, driven from their houses, deprived of all means of support, and banished from France with such inhuman and unjust harshness that some of the philosophers thought it their duty to take up their defence in the name of common humanity.

These Jesuits, whom Madame de Pompadour hunted out of France, Frederick the Great was very glad to retain in his kingdom. "They are the best priests I have ever known," he said. Catherine II., too, welcomed them to her vast

domains, and availed herself of their services in founding educational institutions.

Voltaire was triumphant. "Ferney was the court of all Europe," says Chateaubriand, in his "Analyse raisonnée de L'Histoire de France." "The universal homage rendered to the genius who was striking with ever-increasing force at the very foundations of existing society was characteristic of the impending transformation of that society. And yet it is true that if Louis XV. had shown the least attention to the flatterer of Madame de Pompadour, if he had treated him as Louis XIV. treated Racine, Voltaire would have laid down his sceptre, and exchanged his power for some anteroom preferment, just as Cromwell was on the point of exchanging the figure which he makes in history to-day for the garter of Alix of Salisbury; such are the mysterious operations of human vanity."

Madame de Pompadour had made an effort to extort laudatory words from Voltaire, and she succeeded. When she was persecuting the Jesuits she was justly entitled to his support. When she died the patriarch of Ferney was almost touched. He wrote to Damilaville: "Believe me, dear brother, the real men of letters, the real philosophers ought to deplore the death of Madame de Pompadour. Her beliefs were what they ought to have been, as no one knew better than myself. She is, in truth, a great loss to us." And to the Cardinal de Bernis he wrote: "I think, Monseigneur, that Madame de Pompadour was a sincere friend of yours, and if I may go even farther, it seems to me, here

in the heart of my Allobrogian solitude, that the king will find a sad blank in his life. He was beloved for himself alone by a soul of inborn sincerity, who had justness of discernment, and a just heart." Voltaire is always the same; he is lacking not only in religious belief, but in moral sense as well.

While the foundations of the monarchy were cracking on all sides, the patriarch of Ferney, the old courtier of nobles and crowned heads, was fairly leaping with joy and pride. "Everything that I see," he wrote to M. de Chauvelin, on the 2d of April, 1762, "points to the sowing of the seed of a revolution which is absolutely sure to come, but which I, alas! shall not have the pleasure of witnessing. The light is so thoroughly distributed from place to place that it will burst forth at the first opportunity, and then what a fine row there will be! The youth of to-day are very fortunate; they will see many great sights!"

Insensate fool, to regret that he was not destined to witness the scaffolds of ninety-three!

Madame de Pompadour also felt that the whole edifice, political, social, and religious, would come tumbling about their ears within a few years. But why should she concern herself about the future? Why give way to melancholy thoughts and sinister presentiments? The heart's desire of the haughty favorite was to succeed in retaining, to the last hour of her last day on earth, the sceptre of queen *de la main gauche*. All else was of little moment to her. It was she, not Louis XV., who said, "After me, the deluge!"

XIII.

DEATH OF THE MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR.

IT is a wise dispensation of Providence that no one can make a shining mark in the world without undergoing suffering in proportion, and that jealous Fortune always takes her pay for such measure of success as she bestows. Women are like conquerors, — they always have to expiate their triumphs. These queens of fashion, these dazzling sorceresses, who glow for the moment like meteors, and live in a cloud of incense, have, after all is said, no choice save that between death and dethronement. To die or to grow old, that is the terrible dilemma from whose horns they cannot escape.

It is a law of universal application, to which those women who possess no extraordinary charm bow without demur. But the famous toast, the haughty beauty, who dotes upon herself, as if her youth was perennial, rebels in secret against her cruel fate, and suffers in silence real martyrdom. Her clenched fingers try to retain their grasp upon the sceptre which is slipping away from them. She cannot endure the thought of descending from the throne whence she has been accustomed to look down upon a crowd

of servile sycophants. As the change takes place gradually, insensibly so to speak, she has hardly remarked the premonitory symptoms of the decay of her charms. On all sides she is assured that she is more fascinating and radiant than ever. Then, in the last bloom of the fading remnant of her youth, she experiences that indefinable feeling, compounded of anxious joy and melancholy pleasure, which takes possession of the soul in the glory of the last fine days of autumn. As one gazes upon the clear azure of the heavens it is impossible to believe that winter is at hand. But if one looks at his feet, the yellowed leaves which cover the ground or whirl about in the wind are a certain reminder that Nature's festal days are near their close.

The woman who at whatsoever cost is willing to deceive herself as to the immortality of her charms, does not fail to notice signs of warning which grieve her, and fill her heart with dread, — the first wrinkles, the first gray hairs, the complexion to be made up; the lips and eyes which call loudly for a touch of ravage-repairing rouge; the insolent mirror, which one does not dare to shatter, even though it gives the lie to one's flatterers and brutally tells the truth in its unspoken language!

Madame de Pompadour was forty-two years old. Prematurely aged by the unhealthy excitement of perpetual scheming, of ambition and vainglorioussness, she suffered alike in mind and body. Frequent attacks of palpitation caused her constant inquietude, and fever was her daily

companion. Having reached the end of her career, she looked sadly back upon the road she had travelled, and understood at last the emptiness of those things in which she had sought happiness, and sought it in vain. But she lacked one necessary prerequisite to serious conversion: she had no religious faith, like that which sustained Mademoiselle de La Vallière. But in default of faith, the marquise had an abundant supply of courage. She fought vigorously against disease, but she remained worldly and theatrical to the last, even in suffering, and when death was at hand.

"She had no desire to go to Paris," says M. Arsène Houssaye. "At court she never appeared except by candle-light, attired like a queen of Golconda, with a crown of diamonds, twenty bracelets on her arms, and a trailing gown of Indian silk trimmed with gold and silver. She was still the divine marquise of former days; but as one looked at her more closely, one could see that she was only a painting, — lovely still, but here and there rubbed and retouched. Her mouth was the first feature to show a loss of beauty. She had contracted the habit of biting her lips to hide her feelings very early in life, and at thirty her mouth had lost all its vivacious expression. It had to be touched up with paint after every meal and every kiss!"

Her eyes preserved all their brilliancy, but the rest of her personal attributes were fast losing their charm. In vain did she try, by all the artifices known to the toilet, to conceal her excessive thinness.

The hand of death was upon her. She was taken ill at Choisy, and requested, while there was still time, to be taken to Versailles, that she might die there, as she had lived, amid the evidences of her dominion. Her friends had a moment of reviving hope, as she seemed to be slightly better. The poet Favart seized the opportunity to write these lines: —

"Le soleil est malade
Et Pompadour aussi;
Ce n'est qu'une passade,
L'un est l'autre et guéri;
Le bon Dieu, qui seconde
Nos vœux et notre amour,
Pour le bonheur du monde,
Nous a rendu le jour,
Avec Pompadour."

Palissot matched them with the following offering to the marquise: —

"Vous êtes trop chère à la France,
Au dieu des arts et des amours,
Pour redouter du sort la fatale puissance.
Tous les dieux veillaient sur vos jours,
Tous étaient animés du zèle qui m'inspire;
En volant à votre secours
Ill ont affermi leur empire."

Madame de Pompadour did not allow herself to be deceived by this hyperbolical fooling. All this mythological clap-trap failed to impose on her. She understood perfectly well that she had nothing in common with the

sun, and felt the icy grasp of death already upon her heart.

"It will come in its appointed time," says Bossuet; "it will come, that last sickness, when, surrounded by hosts of friends, physicians, and servants, you will linger along without hope, more desolate and alone than the poor wretch who dies upon his bag of straw, and has not a piece of cloth for his winding sheet. For in that fatal sickness, what will friends avail, except to sadden you with their presence? what the physicians, except to torture you? what the servants, except to rush hither and thither through the house, in useless eagerness to serve you? Oh! then you need other friends, other servants than these; the poor whom you have despised are the only ones who could bring succor to you then. Why did you not think in good season to make such friends as these, who would hold out their arms to you now, and welcome you to the tabernacles of the Most High?"*

Even upon her deathbed Madame de Pompadour, always the slave of him whose mistress she was said to be, feared the king more than God himself. She sent, it is said, to Louis, to ask if it was his desire that she should confess her sins. The king replied in the affirmative. A curé from Paris, the curé of the Madeleine, attended the dying woman. As he was about to withdraw, they say that she detained him with a last smile and said: "One moment, Monsieur le Curé, let us go together."

* Bossuet, "Sermon sur l'impenitence finale."

A few minutes before, she had asked to have her will read over to her; it began as follows: "I, Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour, wife of Charles-Guillaume Lenormand d'Étioles, Esquire, but living apart from him, have made and written this will and statement of my last wishes, which I desire to have carried out in every particular. I commend my soul to God, imploring him to have pity upon it, to forgive my sins, and to give me grace to repent of them and die in a frame of mind deserving of his pity; hoping to appease his wrath by the merit of the precious blood of my Saviour, Jesus Christ, and by the weighty intercession of the Holy Virgin, and all the saints in Heaven. I desire that my body be taken to the Capucines, Place Vendôme, at Paris, without formality, and there be interred in the crypt of the chapel which has been sold to me."

We see from this that the marquise was no such scoffer as the Encyclopedists claimed. The poor woman was made of the same clay as all the kings on earth. Perhaps, at the eleventh hour, she turned her face toward the King of Heaven.

She breathed her last on the 15th of April, 1764. For a long time Louis had ceased to care for her; he only tolerated her. His only reason for allowing her to stay on at court was the fear that disgrace would cause her to die of grief and shame.

Her premature decease was to him more of a relief than a sorrow. There is a story that he was looking out of one

of the windows of the palace when the vehicle set out for Paris with her remains, in a frightful storm; and that he coolly remarked: "The marquise has not a very pleasant day for her journey." Then he drew his watch and calmly made a calculation as to the probable time of the arrival of the funeral, — and that was all.

Madame de Pompadour's career was like a burlesque of real greatness; the same may be said of her obsequies. A Capucin monk was commissioned to pronounce her funeral oration, and acquitted himself of the difficult task like a man of talent. "I receive to-day," said he, "the body of the most eminent and powerful Marquise de Pompadour, lady-in-waiting to the queen. She attended the school of all the virtues, for her Majesty is the pattern of goodness and modesty and kindness of heart." In this strain he continued for quarter of an hour, pronouncing a well-merited eulogy upon the queen.

Marie Leczinska, always so charitable to the failings of others, was amazed at the remarkable celerity with which the too notorious favorite passed out of mind. "We hear no more of her who has gone," said she to Président Hénault, "than if she had never lived. Such is the world; it is hardly worth one's while to care for it!"

Once she was dead, Madame de Pompadour no longer seemed worth hating. The literary men and artists, however, whom she had patronized in times gone by, gave some slight tokens of regret. Voltaire, although he could not quite forgive her for her friendship to Crébillon, wrote to

M. de Cideville: "I have been much grieved by the death of Madame de Pompadour. It is absurd, indeed, that an old scribbler like myself, who can hardly walk, should still live on, and that a beautiful woman should die at forty, — at the very zenith of the most glorious career in the world. Perhaps if she had had a taste of the life of repose which I am enjoying, she might be living still."

Diderot was more severe. He had to write an account of the Salon of 1765, where a picture by Vanloo was exhibited, — painted during Madame de Pompadour's illness, and representing the Arts appealing, in their despair, to Fate, to prolong the life of the marquise.

"Vanloo's 'Suppliants,'" said the critic, "obtained no favors from Fate, who takes more interest in France than in the Arts. Madame de Pompadour died at a moment when she was thought to be out of danger. Let us see what remains to remind us of that woman, who drained us of men and money, left us dishonored and despondent, and upset the whole political system of Europe. The Treaty of Versailles, which will last as long as it may; the 'Amour' of Bouchardon, which will be admired forever; a few stones engraved by Guay, at which future antiquaries will marvel; a pretty little picture by Vanloo, which will be looked at now and then; and a pinch of ashes."

XIV.

THE DECLINING YEARS OF MARIE LECZINSKA.

WHEN wearied by the glare of dazzling radiance, the eyes are glad to seek repose in a soft and soothing light. And so after the haughty favorite one loves to gaze upon the kindly queen.

The contrast between the mistress and the legitimate wife is all to the advantage of the latter. In the one are seen the agitated workings of an uneasy conscience; in the other, peace of mind and heart. Scorn is the portion of one, respect, of the other; the life of one is scandalous, and of the other edifying.

The "Mémoires" of the Duc de Luynes and Président Hénault teach us to know the qualities of Marie Leczinska, just as the moral sores of Madame de Pompadour are laid bare by Madame du Hausset. From reading both, we reach a salutary conclusion: that the queen, neglected as she was, and despite the obscure part she was content to play, was less unhappy nevertheless than the omnipotent favorite, who disposed of the monarchy as freely as she did of the livings in the king's gift.

Both alike had their sorrows; but God gives us strength to bear the ills which he sends us, while those which we bring upon ourselves are insupportable. The heaviest chains are those which our own hands have forged. The long list of suicides is an argument in support of this statement. For instance, is there any more bitter sorrow than that of a mother for the loss of a child? Yet you never hear that a woman who has met with such a loss ends her own life on that account. On the other hand, how many self-destroyers are there among the victims of pride or debauchery!

Religion softens the sorrows which come in the natural order of events. But those which arise from acts of rebellion against Providence, those which we wilfully bring upon ourselves by criminal caprice or insensate ambition, have in them something that makes comfort or relief impossible. Madame de Pompadour sought in vain a place of rest for her soul.

The queen found such strength at the altar's foot that after she had knelt before the image of our Lord Jesus Christ she could drink the cup of bitterness to the dregs, and retain no bitter taste upon her lips.

While the sin-laden mistress was so tortured and oppressed to behold her youth flying away from her, the virtuous wife felt neither pain nor regret at the approach of old age. It is the good fortune of honest women that they are able to accept without murmuring the inexorable laws of man's destiny, and to refrain from a mad struggle against

nature, in the vain hope of repairing the irreparable ravages of time. The marquise plastered her face with white and red paint to cover up the wrinkles of anxiety, and in a desperate endeavor to keep up the illusion of youth she exhausted all the wiles of coquetry. Marie Leczinska, on the other hand, never for an instant thought of trying to rejuvenate herself. Casanova, who was present at one of her dinner-parties at Fontainebleau, describes her as "without rouge, quietly dressed, with a great cap on her head — a venerable appearance, and a devout expression."

This Christian simplicity of life was not without charm. The queen was bright as well as amiable, and her qualities of mind and heart were foreshadowed on her visage, which had an intellectual expression, without trace of evil thoughts, and was venerable without being morose.

While Louis and his mistresses, amid all their dissipation and debauchery, were so gloomy always, and seemed so out of conceit with everything, Marie Leczinska never uttered a word of complaint. Her disposition was really very sprightly,— not with that artificial, noisy, ephemeral gayety which vice assumes for the moment, but with a sweet and lasting light-heartedness, gentle and unaffected, which comes from an even temper and an untroubled conscience.

What a manifestation of moral health and well-being! What resignation and sympathetic calm of soul! The queen was interested in many things, and loved respectable amusements. In great contrast to Louis, who was bored by everything, she was fond of music, she painted a little,

embroidered, played on the guitar, the viol, and harpsichord, and was very glad to take a hand at *cavagnole.*

Président Hénault takes us with him into the little cabinet whither she used to retire after dining alone in public, as required by the etiquette of the court. "It seems like a different climate here," he says; "she is no longer queen, but a simple subject. All sorts of work are lying about, embroidery-frames of all kinds; and while she employs her hands she tells us of her reading, mentioning passages which have impressed her, and speaking of them with appreciation."

Look at La Tour's painting, so well described by Sainte-Beuve: "The queen is painted half-length. She has a closed fan in her hand, and is turning toward the observer as if she had in her mind, and was on the point of uttering, some bit of trifling, innocent roguery. Her hair is slightly powdered; on her head is a bit of black lace,— a sort of little fichu, called a *fanchonette.* A short cape of pale-blue silk, with puffs or ribbons of a grayish tint, the shades blending so perfectly that they seem to run into one another. A quiet harmony of tone pervades the whole. The finely cut lip, a little thin and turned up at the corner, the small but sparkling eye, the roguish nose, — every feature of her face, in fact, speaks of gentle sweetness, refinement, and sportiveness. Lay aside her rank and her name, and you would surely say that this lady, of uncertain age, has the power of apt and ready repartee, the pinch of salt without bitterness."

How many times at Versailles have I stayed my steps in the queen's bed-chamber (No. 116 of the "Notice," etc.), which was occupied by Marie Leczinska from December 1, 1725, the day of her arrival at the palace of Louis XIV. down to June 24, 1768, when she died! At the end of the recess, to the right, above a little door which led to the queen's *petits appartements* (No. 122 of the "Notice"), now hangs the fine portrait of Marie Leczinska by Nattier. She is seated, dressed in a red gown trimmed with fur, her arm resting upon a table, whereon are the crown, the royal mantle, and the Holy Gospels. Neither in her posture, her expression, nor her costume is there anything showy or stagey; it is a mixture of goodness and dignity, — a queen, indeed, but a Christian queen.

After the pencil, the pen; after Nattier, Madame du Deffand. Let us listen a moment to the famous marquise, ordinarily so sarcastic: —

"Thémire has a fine mind, a tender heart, a lovely disposition, and an attractive face. Her education has implanted in her soul so true a spirit of piety that it has become her ruling sentiment, and one which she makes use of to control all the others. Thémire loves God; and next to him she loves whatever is truly lovable. She knows how to combine the agreeable and the instructive; she devotes herself to each in turn, and sooner or later brings them into perfect accord. Her virtues are the germ and the flower of her passions. In her, perfect moral purity is combined with extreme delicacy of feeling, and true modesty with

an earnest desire to please, which in itself is sufficient to assure success.

"Her discernment enables her to detect eccentricities and absurdities, which her kind heart and charitable disposition make it possible for her to endure with patience, seldom yielding to her inclination to laugh.

"The respect which she inspires is due to her virtues, rather than to any assumption of dignity; in her presence one can give full play to the flow of one's wit, her own is so penetrating and refined. She catches a point so quickly and unerringly that it is easy to convey to her whatsoever thoughts one wishes, without derogating from the respect due to her rank. In observing Thémire, one forgets that there can be any other greatness or elevation than that of the soul; one almost yields to the illusion that she is separated from us only by her superior merit; but the cruel awakening apprises us that this talented, lovable Thémire is the queen."

Never was a more faithful friend than Marie Leczinska. The little *coterie* with whom her days were passed showed no less affection than respect for her. After supper, she went almost every evening to the apartments of the Duchesse de Luynes, her maid-of-honor, where she was sure to find, besides the duke and duchess, the Cardinal de Luynes, the Duc and Duchesse de Chevreuse, and Président Hénault. It was a season of relaxation and pleasant conversation. The learned president fairly coruscated there. One day he offered the queen the manuscript of his "Abrégé

chronologique." She returned it to him with these words written inside: "It seems to me that M. Hénault, who says so much in so few words, can hardly care much for the chatter of a lot of women who talk so much and say so little." She wrote underneath, in place of a signature, "Guess who." The gallant author replied at once:—

"Ces mots tracés par une main divine
Ne peuvent me causer que trouble et qu'embarras.
C'est trop oser si mon cœur les devine;
C'est être ingrat que ne deviner pas."

On another occasion Fontenelle, then ninety-two years old, addressed these lines to the president:—

"Il fallait n'être vieux qu'à Sparte,
Disent les anciens écrits.
Grand Dieu! combien je m'en écarte,
Moi qui suis si vieux dans Paris.
O Sparte! ô Sparte! hélas! qu'etes-vous devenue?
Vous saviez tout le prix d'une tête chenue.

"Plus dans la canicule on était bien fourré,
Plus l'oreille était dure et l'œil éclairé,
Plus on déraisonnait dans sa triste famille,
Plus on épiloguait sur la moindre vétille,
Plus on avait de goutte et d'autre béatille,
Plus on avait perdu de dents de leur bon gré,
Plus on marchait courbé sur sa grosse béquille,
Plus on était enfin digne d'être enterré,
Et plus dans ses remparts ou était honoré.

"O Sparte, ô Sparte! hélas! qu'êtes-vous devenue?
Vous saviez tout le prix d'une tête chenue."

The queen having read them, wrote to M. Hénault: "Tell Fontenelle that such a brain as his ought to find a Sparta everywhere."

The old fellow, highly delighted, replied with this quatrain: —

"Les ans accumulés me poussent trop à bout,
Je ne puis plus, hélas! trouver Sparta partout,
Mais vous, le modèle des reines,
Vous devez bien trouver partout Athènes."

The kindly, affectionate heart of Marie Leczinska is nowhere more perfectly revealed than in the simple, friendly letters which she wrote to the Duchesse de Luynes. We quote from one or two of them taken at random: —

"22d DECEMBER, 1750.

"Nothing could have given me so much pleasure as your letter, had I not in anticipation the very much greater one of seeing you within four weeks. It is true, however, that to let me hear from you sometimes, unless it tires you too much, will tend to shorten the time of separation which seems terribly long to me already. I only beg you not to feel under any obligation for my affection; it belongs to you of right. Your letter moved me to tears. Yes, God will preserve you, I know, so long as I live; I implore him to do so with all my heart.

"When I write to M. de Luynes, I say: 'I embrace Madame de Luynes;' but in sending a message to you for him, I think it is more becoming to ask you to do it for

me. And Monseigneur, what of him? He must, I think, include everything in the blessing which I ask at his hands."

The Duc de Luynes, on New Year's Day, sent the queen a little chest. Marie Leczinska thanked him in the following note, dated January 1, 1751: "It is useless for me to tell you that the chest is lovely, in the latest style, and the sweetest thing in the world, for you know all that. But there is something you do not know, and that is, that I am like a child with a new toy. It is just such unaffected joy which fills my heart, except that it is the gratitude of one who knows the world a little, — and to her sorrow, — and to whom God has given the boon, despite the corruption of the world, of having estimable and lovable friends."

The chest contained, among other things, a pair of spectacles which the good queen's eyes stood in need of. "Here I am happy for the whole day with Madame de Luynes's 'good-night,'" she wrote the duke on the 2d of January, 1751. "Do you know what I was doing when I received Monseigneur's letter? I was with — whom do you suppose? — the beautiful eyes of my chest. The 'Avare' never was so fond of his."

The briefest absences from court of the duchess seemed to the queen to last forever. She would write letters upon letters to her maid-of-honor, saying that full and free correspondence was one of the greatest delights of friendship. The following letter shows how tender and loving a friend she was. The Duchesse de Luynes might well have been

deeply touched upon receiving such an outpouring of heart-felt affection: —

"23d JANUARY, 1751.

"Can you guess the pleasure I gave myself last evening? I surprised M. de Luynes by calling upon him at his own quarters; I found him just finishing his supper with Monseigneur (the Bishop of Bayeux) in his charming little room. I cannot tell how overjoyed I was to see your apartments once more. I stayed there a moment to feast my eyes on them; for, failing to find you there, I had almost begun to fear that somebody might be there in your place. Pleasures which exist only in the imagination, we must make the most of. I am impatiently awaiting the reality."

Marie Leczinska's education was very thorough; she knew six languages, — Polish, French, Italian, German, Swedish, and Latin. Literary men marvelled at her accuracy of judgment on profound subjects. Several sayings of hers have come down to us, which attest a mind imbued with a profound insight into the human heart: —

"We ought not to think about others' faults, except so far as is necessary to keep ourselves from falling into the like."

"Human wisdom teaches us to dissemble our pride; religion alone destroys it."

"To live at peace in society, we must see only those things which please us, and shut our eyes to the absurdities and eccentricities which offend us."

"Those women who pride themselves most upon knowing what they would do better not to know, are the very ones who care the least about learning those things which it is shameful not to know."

"The women of whom the best things are said after their death are those about whom one hears the least during their lifetime."

"Many princes, on their deathbed, have regretted the wars in which they have engaged, but we never hear of one who was sorry that he had lived in peace."

"Good kings are slaves, and their subjects are free."

"The only thing which can compensate for the constraint of the throne is the pleasure of doing good."

"In politics, as in morals, the shortest way to make men happy is to do one's best to make them virtuous."

The sovereign who uttered such thoughts was no ordinary woman. She rose above all her husband's favorites, not only by her virtues and her estimable qualities of mind and heart, but by her intelligence, her learning, and her wit.

XV.

MARIE LECZINSKA AND HER DAUGHTERS.

MARIE LECZINSKA was a most affectionate mother. Her daughters and her son were encompassed with the most devoted care, and were inspired by her with Christian sentiments.

M. Michelet, who, in his later works, tried to pollute whatever he touched, has struggled in vain to cast odium and ridicule upon the daughters of Louis XV. He has failed, with all his venomous insinuations, and his slanderous innuendoes, to dim the halo of purity which glows around the brow of those virtuous princesses. The truth is told in the admirable work of M. Édouard de Barthélemy,* an impartial judge and sagacious critic. An interesting book, recently issued by M. Honoré Bonhomme,† has also cleared the memory of the daughters of Louis XV. from foul aspersions which even the most relentless foes of monarchy and the most violent pamphleteers did not allow themselves to stoop to.

* Mesdames de France, filles de Louis XV. Didier.

† "Louis XV. et sa famille," based upon letters and unpublished documents. 1 vol. Dentu.

The lover of Madame de Pompadour was, beyond question, a bad husband, but he was a kind father, and to charge him with the hideous crime of incest is to write history after the manner of Don Basilio. M. Michelet seems, in very truth, to have been possessed with a mania for seeing crime everywhere. He had already undertaken to transform into an incestuous passion one of the most saintlike attachments which are recorded in the annals of our country, — that of Marguerite of Navarre for her brother François I. The charges made by him against the daughters of Louis XV. are no less devoid of foundation. Only one fact is alleged to establish them, and that is that the princesses lived under their father's roof. But we will not dwell upon the conduct of a certain school. There are assertions which are not even worthy of being refuted.

All the king's daughters except Madame Adélaïde passed their childhood at the Abbey of Fontevrault. Cardinal de Fleury was of the opinion that the residence of the little princesses at Versailles cost too much; and Louis, yielding to the suggestion of his parsimonious minister, determined regretfully to part from his children. Adélaïde alone, by dint of prayers and supplications, succeeded in escaping the abbey. On returning from mass one day, she threw herself at her father's feet, and, although she was only seven years old, she won her suit. The king shed a few tears, says Barbier, and promised that she should not go.

We can easily understand how it afflicted the good queen to live so far from her daughters. She wrote to the

Duchesse de Luynes, on the 12th of October, 1747: "The king surprised me by showing me the portraits of my daughters at Fontevrault. I did not know they had been painted. The two older ones are really beautiful; but I have never seen anything so lovely as the baby. She has a most touching face, and yet it is anything but sad; I never saw such another; it is touching and sweet and clever too. If my letter seems too long, I know you will attribute it to my mother-love, and take it as the confidence of a dear friend."

Of the six daughters of Louis XV., the twins, Elisabeth and Henriette, were born in 1727, Adélaïde in 1732, Victoire in 1733, Sophie in 1734, and Louise (the future Carmelite) in 1737. The three princesses whom the queen mentions in the letter we have quoted, and who were still at Fontevrault when that letter was written, were Victoire, Sophie, and Louise. The twins, Elisabeth and Henriette, had left the convent in 1739, and shortly after the first married the Infant Philip, son of Philip V. of Spain. After that she was called Madame Infante.

The six sisters were called indiscriminately Mesdames de France, although only this one ever married. When she set out for Spain, a child of twelve (August 31, 1739), the twins were heart-broken at having to part. They could not bear to say the last word. "It is forever!" they cried; and their voices were broken with sobs.

Louis XV. bore his daughter company as far as Plessis-Picquet. The Duc de Luynes narrates that he gave his

daughter most affectionate advice *en route* as to the proper course of conduct for her to adopt in her new home, where, he said, her lovely disposition would infallibly win all hearts. He spoke so fondly and feelingly that all who heard him shed tears.

In 1748 the infante's husband obtained the sovereignty of Parma, Plaisance, and Guastalla, by the terms of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Before going with her husband to the seat of his new government, she visited her parents at Versailles. In the eighteenth century princes and princesses rarely travelled to any extent. What joy to be able to embrace a father and mother, brother and sisters, who did not dare to hope ever to see you again! Marie Leczinska returned thanks to God for the blessed privilege. The little girl who had left Versailles at twelve years of age returned a young woman in all the glory of her twenty-second year. The dauphin was wild with delight. In the first flush of his joy he kissed everybody he saw, even the chambermaids.

Sophie and Louise were still at Fontevrault, but Henriette, Adélaïde, and Victoire were at Versailles. Their sister's arrival was to them an occasion of supreme happiness. Madame Infante, happy to be once more with her own, had not the strength to leave them again. Months succeeded one another, and she could not make up her mind to leave Versailles, where her filial and sisterly affection held her by such sweet ties. However, it had to come. In October, 1749, the dreaded moment arrived, and the farewell

words had to be said. Henriette was so overcome with sorrow at parting from her beloved sister that she swooned again and again. The dauphin wept bitterly; and Louis, who loved his daughters from the bottom of his heart, showed by his emotion the depth of his paternal affection.

Some years later, Madame Infante returned to Versailles once more; but there was a cloud upon the gladness of that home-coming. Her twin sister, dear Henriette, whom she considered, so to speak, as the half of her own soul, was not there to meet her.

Henriette died at the age of twenty-four (February 10, 1752). This young girl, as unhappy in her lot as she was affectionate by nature, was surely one of the most affecting figures in the gallery of the women of Versailles. Let us allow M. Honoré Bonhomme to speak for us, who has drawn an exquisite portrait of her moral and physical characteristics: —

"Being of a sickly constitution, Madame Henriette had that ivory whiteness of complexion which is peculiar to the daughters of the races of the North, and which her mother — a Pole by blood and birth — had transmitted to her with the breath of life. Delicate and slender, there was something about her of the inspired dreamer of dreams. Her sweet, chaste features, of an aristocratic cast, were fascinating and imposing at once; her smile was sad, and the general expression of her countenance, on which light and shade were continually struggling for the mastery, seemed to bear the impress of fatality.

"She bore in her heart the secret of her destiny. Like poor, pale Ophelia, she was destined to die gathering flowers; and like Myrto, André Chenier's young Tarentine, was never to cross a husband's threshold. In short, being animated within by the sacred fire and dreaming of great achievements, she had every refinement of mind as well as every delicate emotion of the heart. Gazing into her great dreamy eyes, which gave back a reflection like the clear, still waters of a deep lake, one might divine what depths of love and devotion were hidden there; and might foresee that her first love would be her last, and that she would die where her heart was given."

And that was what actually came to pass. Madame Henriette had conceived for the young Duc de Chartres, son of the Duc d'Orléans, an attachment which was reciprocated by him. The Marquis d'Argenson wrote on the 30th of November, 1739: "A determined effort is being made to marry M. le Duc de Chartres to Madame Seconde" (which was the name sometimes given to Madame Henriette, as her twin sister, Madame Infante, was called Madame Première), "and it is supposed that the king has determined upon it, and is bringing it about little by little. Nothing would be more consistent with pacific intentions; for all Europe would see from that that the king was more inclined to establish the Orléans branch than the Spanish in the line of succession to the dauphin."

In order to understand this phrase, we must remember that the dauphin was still unmarried, and that the question

was often asked, "What would happen if this only son of Louis XV. should die without issue male?" Many thought that, in that event, the king, notwithstanding the renunciations of the Treaty of Utrecht, would choose his heir among the Spanish Bourbons, and not in the Orléans family. D'Argenson was a partisan of the Orléans interest. Cardinal de Fleury, on the other hand, was bitterly hostile to it, as if he had cast a glimpse into futurity. The old minister played his cards so well that the king, who was really in sympathy with the Duc de Chartres, an amiable and worthy prince, refused to give his sanction to the projected marriage.

One day the duke was riding at his sovereign's side. "Sire," said he, "I cherished a fond hope. Your Majesty did not refuse it to my father. Its fulfilment would serve the happiness of Madame Henriette, who would remain in France with your Majesty. May I still venture to hope?"

The king leaned over toward the prince, with a sorrowful pressure of the hand. He must renounce that fair dream of love, so quickly faded.

Three years later the Duc de Chartres married the daughter of the Prince de Bourbon-Conti. Madame Henriette summoned sufficient courage to hide her terrible sorrow. She was present, with death in her heart but a smile on her lips, at the wedding of him whom she loved (December 9, 1743).

From that day her heart was broken; and her last years were one long immolation. Nattier painted the princess

in the twofold character of Fire and Meditation. She is leaning upon a tripod, where half-consumed torches are smouldering. These torches resemble the almost extinct passion of the prince to whom the young girl would have been glad to plight her faith. Not a complaint or a murmur was heard to issue from her lips. Calm, serious, and collected, she passed her days in meditation and in prayer. The visit of her twin-sister was like a ray of light in darkest night; but with the parting from the dear companion of her childhood all the wounds of her loving, faithful heart began to bleed afresh.

The arrival of her three younger sisters, Victoire, Sophie, and Louise, who left the convent of Fontevrault toward the close of 1750, did not fill the void in her heart.

She who had sacrificed her happiness for him would have been glad to know that the Duc de Chartres at least was happy; but such was not the case. The duke had married a wife whose conduct was said to be exemplary in every respect; but he could not forget the pure, affectionate Henriette, who haunted him like the very image of sorrow. The princess wept silently in her oratory, and consecrated her suffering to God. The earth was not worthy of her.

There are characters which can develop in all their glory only in a better world than this. Grief had undermined Madame Henriette's constitution, and she died on the 10th of February, 1752. "Oh, my sister, my dearest sister!" those were her last words. She died, as she had lived,

loving to the last. "Unhappy plaything of fate," says M. Honoré Bonhomme; "poor dear saint, virgin, and martyr, who devoted nine years of her life to climbing, step by step, the Calvary where she finally rendered up her soul."

The Duc de Luynes adds to his relation of her death: "I cannot describe the overwhelming grief of the king. The queen is sadly afflicted, too, as are M. le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine, and Mesdames. Madame Adélaïde does not weep at all; but silent grief commonly lasts the longer. Madame Henriette was dearly loved. Her gentle disposition, equable and yielding, made her extremely obliging to M. le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine, and Mesdames her sisters."

Upon hearing the sad news of her sister's death Madame Infante wrote her father a most touching letter. She longed, she said, to come and mingle her tears with those of her family. She arrived in France in September, 1752, and remained with her father a year.

Madame Infante was not happy. She had only moderate esteem for her husband; and that prince made rather a sad figure in his little sovereignty of Parma and Plaisance. He had neither prestige nor funds; and his wife, who was very clever, and of whom Bernis said that she would make a good minister of foreign affairs, was always dreaming of some more important establishment for him. Her thoughts ranged from exchanging Parma for Tuscany to the acquisition of dominions in Flanders or Lorraine, or even in Corsica. She fancied that by favor of her father's affection

for her, and the general territorial rearrangements in Europe, she would finally obtain something or other.

The Marquis d'Argenson, who had little sympathy for her, wrote on the 27th of September, 1753: "It is to be hoped that this is her last visit to France. Is it just that the State should suffer because she made such a bad match? She is taking away with her a long train of carriages loaded with all sorts of clothing and furniture given her by the king."

Madame Infante did come back to France a third time, but it was to die there. She arrived at the Château of Choisy on the 3d of September, 1757. If we are to believe M. Michelet it was she alone who was responsible for the Seven Years' War. But there is no basis for that statement of the great writer, who founded, toward the end of his life, what we might call the school of historical invention.

When she reappeared at court Madame Infante was in blooming, vigorous health. No one could have foreseen that her death was so near at hand. One of her last letters was addressed to her son Ferdinand, whom she had left at Parma. It began thus:—

"Life is uncertain, my son, and my nature is too sincere to allow me to boast, or to affect complete indifference as to the duration of my own; but I feel that my desire to see you, and to leave you worthy of the name you bear, such a man in short as I wish you to be, is one of the things which make life most dear to me, and, it may be, one of the causes

which will do most to shorten my life, by the incessant torture which grows out of that desire and the dread that it may not be gratified. It will be a great comfort to me to be able to leave you this declaration of my sentiments if I die before you are old enough to read it; if I live, it will serve me as a plan upon which to form your mind; and in either case it will always be a proof of my affection for you, and of the careful thought I have taken for your welfare, at an age when many people do not know that there is such a thing."

Only a few days after writing that letter Madame Infante was stricken with small-pox, and expired (December 6, 1759). Thus the twin sisters, who were so tenderly attached to one another, both came to an untimely end. Madame Henriette died at twenty-four, Madame Infante at thirty-two. She was buried by her sister's side at Saint-Denis; thus they were reunited in the tomb.

Marie Leczinska's heart was torn with grief; but instead of murmuring against the decrees of Providence, she bowed with resignation beneath the hand of God, who chastened her. The five children who remained, the dauphin, Adélaïde, Victoire, Sophie, and Louise showed her the most touching affection. Never was mother more fondly cherished. Louis took great pleasure in the society of his daughters. As a father he had that sort of bourgeoise affability which, unhappily, is seldom found among princes. Mesdames had apartments beneath those of the king, in the suite formerly occupied by Madame de Montespan, Madame

Adélaïde occupying a room which communicated with her father's by a hidden staircase.

"Frequently," says Madame Campan in her "Mémoires," "he would carry down coffee which he had made himself, and drink it there. Madame Adélaïde would ring a bell to notify Madame Victoire of the king's visit; Madame Victoire, as she rose to go to her sister, would ring for Madame Sophie, who, in turn, would summon Madame Louise in the same way."

In the twinkling of an eye the four sisters would be gathered around their father. In the evening, at six, on his return from hunting, — at the king's *disbooting* (*débotté*), as they used to say, — the princesses would come to pay their respects to their father, but with some regard to etiquette at such times.

"The princesses," again Madame Campan is speaking, "would slip on an enormous hoopskirt, which supported a petticoat covered with gold and embroidery. They would fasten a long train to the edge, and conceal the *négligé* character of the balance of their costume by a huge cape of black taffeta which covered them to the chin. The *chevaliers d'honneur*, ladies, pages, squires, and ushers holding great torches escorted them to the king's apartments. In an instant the whole palace, ordinarily wrapped in silence, would be all in commotion. The king always kissed each princess on the forehead."

He found more real happiness in the virtuous society of his daughters than in the crowd of courtiers, or in the

arms of his favorites. There were moments when it seemed as if the old rake were taking on virtue with his gray hairs. "The king," wrote D'Argenson, "seems no longer to care for any society save that of his family, like a worthy patriarch."

Marie Leczinska was very grateful to her spouse for the affection he bore his daughters. Mesdames were on most confidential terms with their mother, with whom their relations were extremely tender and pleasant. They loved to make their way into the queen's *petits appartements*, where she laid aside the splendor of the throne to live quietly and simply, like a good mother.

The *petits appartements* (No. 122 of the "Notice," etc.), very small and unpretentious, included three rooms: a salon, a bathroom, and a studio. Madame la Comtesse d'Armaillé, whose fascinating and instructive little book we have cited on several occasions, has given us a charming description of these three rooms where Marie Leczinska passed the greater part of every day.

"Is it not true," she says, "that a woman's temperament and tastes can be divined upon the most cursory view of the sanctuary of her private life, or, to speak more simply, of that part of her abode where by long-continued custom she loves to pass her time? It matters little whether it be a garret or a parlor. Nothing tells so many tales as the interior arrangements of certain houses; nothing gives so accurate an idea of a woman's life-story as the appearance of the place in which she lives.

"In the queen's *petits appartements* everything was to be found which gives charm to a quiet, peaceful existence. Here lay some piece of work begun for the poor or the Church, a whole outfit embroidered by her own hand; there stood an open harpsichord, with a cantata of Moncrif, one of Rameau's operettas, or some of the national songs of Poland; on the other side a drawing-table, a spinning-wheel and distaff, frames for embroidery or weaving, and a little printing-press. Then there were flowers strewn around, paintings, portraits of children, and miniatures. On a console stood a vase presented by the Maréchal de Nangis, a manuscript from Cardinal de Fleury, and a porcelain pagoda with some verses by Madame de Boufflers. In a window-recess stood a cabinet containing the queen's favorite books, with a poem of the Duchesse de Luynes. Everywhere tokens of friendship, of her maternal affection, and of useful or interesting occupations."

There it was that the virtuous queen with her children about her tasted heart-felt joy,—such joy as only a clear conscience can give, and such as the mistresses for whom Louis neglected and abandoned her had never dreamed of.

XVI.

THE DAUPHINE, MARIE-JOSÈPHE DE SAXE.

MARIE LECZINSKA was no less fortunate in her son than in her daughters. The evil examples continually before his eyes at court had not perverted the honorable, straightforward nature of the dauphin. As the Baron de Gleichen, in his "Souvenirs," expresses it, the young prince's piety was of the most enlightened description, and he was clever enough to foresee the dangers of an irreligious life. He was to the highest degree domestic in his tastes and feelings. As son and father, as brother and husband, he constantly manifested the kind and virtuous qualities of his heart. He sincerely mourned his first wife, the amiable infante of Spain, who died in 1746, barely twenty years old. Reasons of State, however, demanded that he should remarry without loss of time, notwithstanding his great affliction.

Louis XV. pitched upon a princess of the royal house of Saxony as a suitable match for his son, that house being the most powerful in Europe next to those of Austria and Prussia. In this way he thought to solidify his German alliances. The Maréchal de Saxe (Maurice), natural son of

Augustus II. of Saxony and Poland, and of the beautiful Comtesse Aurora of Königsmark, was the principal agent in the negotiations looking to a bond of union between his old and his new country. A learned Saxon diplomate, to-day in the Austrian service, Comte Vitzthum, has published an extremely interesting work upon the marshal and upon the princess who married the dauphin, from letters and unpublished documents in the archives at Dresden.

Marie-Josèphe de Saxe, daughter of Augustus III., was fifteen years old at this time. She was an attractive young woman, with great blue eyes, which were gentle and sparkling at the same time. Her face was very intellectual, her disposition exçellent, and her education most thorough.

The Maréchal de Saxe wrote thus to his brother Augustus III.: "What can I say, Sire? It seems to me that this connection is an advantageous one for your family from every point of view, and I shall have no regret in descending to the realms of darkness after I have seen it accomplished; for I shall then have rounded out my career. I have tasted the joys of this world; I have had my fill of such rewards as glory brings. Nothing is left for me but to make myself useful to you in some way, and then my destiny will have been accomplished to my entire satisfaction."

And again, he wrote to the wife of Augustus III., and mother of the future dauphine: "Madame, the Very Christian king wrote me yesterday that he had made a formal request of your Majesty for the hand of the Princesse Marie-

Josèphe. I flatter myself that this request will not be otherwise than welcome, either to the princess or to your Majesty; for Mgr. le Dauphin is, in truth, a very excellent match for her, and I should be very glad if I might live long enough to see our divine princess queen of France. I think this will suit her very well. She has always been my favorite, and it is a long time since I set my heart upon the French crown for her; a very pretty plaything it is, and the prince who will wear it some day is a fine fellow, too. Princesse Josèphe will not suffer from ennui while she is waiting. The royal father-in-law is a charming man; he dotes upon his children, and from the affection which he heaped upon the late dauphine, I judge of what is in store for our princess.

"This is what the king wrote me, word for word, in the letter I received yesterday, written entirely with his own hand: 'You will not be displeased with this marriage, my dear Maréchal? Let your princess know that our happiness and the felicity of my people depend entirely upon her.'"

In the same letter the marshal offered some very sage and sensible advice: "I have a word more to say about the princess. She must be neither too haughty nor too approachable in order to make a success here; but as haughtiness comes from dignity, she can more easily lean a little in that direction. The women of the court are as bright and as wicked as devils. They will never fail in proper respect to her, but they will try to entangle her in their

endless squabbles with one another, which she ought only to laugh at, and derive what amusement she can from them. The king does just that, and if anything should occur to annoy her, she should appeal directly to him; he will advise her and see her safely through it. Such confidence will gratify him, too. He is the one person at court with whom she should have no reserve. She must look upon him as her harbor of refuge, her father, and tell him *everything*, good or bad, as it happens, and conceal nothing from him. With all the rest, let her be on her guard. If she follows this course, he will adore her."

The formal demand for the hand of the princess was made at Dresden on the 7th of January, 1747, by two ambassadors, — the Marquis des Issarts, regular minister at that court, and the Duc de Richelieu, specially accredited for that purpose. Richelieu wrote to the Comte de Loss, *àpropos* of the future dauphine: "I think she is really lovely; she is not a regular beauty, but she has every imaginable charm, — a large nose, great, ripe lips, and the brightest and most speaking eyes in the world. In short, I assure you that if there were any like her at the Opera, there would be a deuce of a hurry to have them auctioned off. I am not exaggerating at all, but I have not said quite so much to anybody else."

Marie-Josèphe de Saxe left Dresden on the 14th of January, 1747. Her first meeting with her *fiancé* took place between Nangis and Corbeil. The marriage ceremony was performed on the 8th of February in the chapel

at Versailles. Four days later the Maréchal de Saxe wrote to Augustus III.:—

"Sire, I shall have no difficulty in saying pleasant things to your Majesty concerning Madame la Dauphine; and common report here will vouch for the truth of what I say. She has made the greatest possible success; she has won everybody's heart, and the queen loves her as if she were her own child. The king is delighted with her, and the dauphin worships her. She has kept her way through it all with admirable address, and I am lost in admiration. There never was such another child of fifteen in this world, as all agree, and I confess that she has astonished me. Your Majesty would not believe with how much dignity and presence of mind Madame la Dauphine has borne herself. M. le Dauphin seems a mere schoolboy beside her."

The young couple were installed on the ground-floor of the south wing of the central part of the palace, immediately beneath the queen's apartments. (The dauphin's sleeping-room was the same in which the regent died, and is to-day the third Salle des Maréchaux, No. 46 of the "Notice," etc., by M. Soulié. The dauphine's bedroom is now the second Salle des Maréchaux, No. 41 of the "Notice.") It was in this last-named apartment that the function known as the *mise au lit*, or putting to bed, took place. In the letter from which we have already quoted, the Maréchal de Saxe thus describes that curious custom to his brother:—

"Surely," says he, "there are times when one needs all his self-possession to play his part with true dignity. One

such is that ceremony of the *mise au lit*, when the bed-curtains are drawn aside after the bride and groom have taken their places in the marriage-bed; and a terrible ordeal it is, for the whole court is present. The king suggested to me to stay near Madame la Dauphine so as to give her courage. She went through with it with a tranquillity which amazed me. The dauphin drew the bedclothes over his face, but my princess kept right on talking to me with fascinating presence of mind, taking no more notice of the courtiers than as if not one of them had been in the room. I said to her, as I approached the bed, that the king had told me to keep near her, to keep her in countenance, and that it would only last a moment. She said that I was doing her a very great service, and I did not leave her until the bed-chamber women had drawn the curtains and the crowd had gone out. I think everybody's conscience rather smote them as they went out, for it seemed like sacrificing her, and she has succeeded in arousing universal interest. Your Majesty may laugh, perhaps, at what I said to her; but the blessing of the bed, the priests and candles, the brilliant display, the youth of the princess, and my earnest longing for her happiness, all these things together evoke reflection rather than smiles."

It was a heavy burden and excessively wearisome which the observance of the prescribed etiquette imposed upon royal families. For two days the dauphine ate nothing at all. "It is caused by her being all tired out," wrote the marshal to King Augustus; "and I have told the king that

she will surely be ill unless she has a chance to take some rest. Really, I do not see how she has avoided it so long, for I am all used up with following her about. It is always so hot all through the reception-rooms that one is like to die from the combined effects of a great crowd of people and candles in the evening. In addition to all this, her dresses are so heavy that I do not see how she can drag them around. More fatiguing still are all these presentations, to which there seems to be no end; and she tries to remember everybody's name, which is a terrible strain upon a mind already fully occupied in entertaining and attending to her guests. The other day the king made me feel the weight of her petticoat, which was lying on a sofa. It weighed fully sixty pounds; there is n't one of our breastplates which is so heavy. I do not understand how the princess can stand on her feet eight or nine hours with that enormous weight dragging her down."

Marie-Josèphe had the art of attracting affection and esteem. A certain courtier, who was impressed with the graces and virtues of the lovely and amiable dauphine, remarked: "We ought hereafter to look for wives only in Saxony; and rather than go without a Saxon wife, if the supply should give out I would have one made of porcelain." Marie Leczinska forgot the long-standing feud between the House of Saxony and her father, Stanislas, arising out of their rivalry for the throne of Poland; she became deeply attached to her daughter-in-law, and bore her a mother's love.

The dauphine, on the 13th of September, 1751, gave birth to a son, who was called Duc de Bourgogne, and who died at the age of nine, after long-continued and terrible suffering, which he supported with a Christian resignation, and fortitude beyond his years. The Marquis de Pompignan wrote a sketch of the little fellow's brief existence.

Some years later another child, fated like him to suffer the tortures of the damned, learned to read in M. de Pompignan's book; it was the innocent of innocents, the future Louis XVII. "How did it happen, pray," cried the wondering child, "that my little uncle was already so learned and so wise?"

On the 23d of August, 1754, the Duc de Berri was born; on the 17th of November, 1755, the Comte de Provence; and on the 9th of November, 1757, the Comte d'Artois. These three princes are known in history as Louis XVI., Louis XVIII., and Charles X., — three names which, thus appearing for the first time, oppress the mind with a sense of unutterable sorrow, and carry it back across the years to a woful period of revolution and disaster.

A great poet has sung of these three brothers, who, happy and heedless, played about in the garden of Versailles in the glad sunshine, without dreaming of tempests of the future: —

> "Dans ces temps radieux, dans cette aube enchantée,
> Dieu! comme avec terreur leur mère épouvantée
> Les eût contre son cœur pressés, pâle et sans voix,
> Si quelque vision, troublant ces jours de fêtes,

Eût jeté tout à coup sur ces fragiles têtes
Ce cri terrible : Enfants, vous serez rois tous trois !
Et la voix prophétique aurait pu dire encore :
Enfants, que votre aurore est une triste aurore !
Que les sceptres pour vous sont d'odieux présents !
D'où vient donc que le Dieu qui punit Babylone
Vous fait à pareille heure éclore au pied du trône ?
Et qu'avez-vous donc fait, ô pauvres innocents ?"

Alas, the three brothers, doomed as by the fatal spell of which the ancients told, would have treated as a madman the prophet of evil who should have drawn the veil which hid their future; so full of suffering, so incredibly sad and terrible was that future to be!

"Que l'aîné peu crédule à la vie, à la gloire,
Au peuple ivre d'amour, sache d'une nuit noire
D'avance emplir son cœur, de courage pourvu ;
Qu'il rêve un ciel de pluie, un tombereau qui roule
Et là-bas, tout au fond, au-dessus de la foule,
Quelque étrange échafaud dans la brume entrevu !
Frères par la naissance, et par le malheur frères,
Les deux autres fuiront, battus de vents contraires,
Le règne de Louis, roi de quelques bannis,
Commence dans l'exil, celui de Charle y tombe.
L'un n'aura pas de sacre, et l'autre pas de tombe.
A l'un Reims doit manquer, à l'autre Saint-Denis." *

Marie-Josèphe de Saxe had eight children, only five of whom survived her, — the three sons, who were destined to reign, one after the other, and two daughters, Madame Clotilde, who became queen of Sardinia, and another, whose

* M. Victor Hugo, "Les Voix Intérieures." *Sunt lacrymæ rerum.*

name alone conjures up the thought of the purest virtue, the deepest piety, the most sublime self-sacrifice, the most heroic fortitude in suffering, in prison, and upon the scaffold, — Madame Elisabeth.

The dauphine was an exemplary wife and mother. Her affability, her sweet and charitable disposition made her beloved and respected by all. It was some compensation for the scandal of the court to contemplate one united household, — a Christian household which set a shining example to the nation. Unhappily death came too soon to shatter that upright and saintly destiny. The dauphin fell sick in November, 1765, being then in his thirty-seventh year.

Were we not right in saying at the beginning of this study that those epochs which are in appearance the most scandalous and corrupt, contain a treasure-house of instruction, in common with all others? The exemplary death of the son of Louis XV. is an admirable exemplification of that truth. The dauphin's last illness had begun.

"I thank God," he said to his confessor, the Jesuit Callet, as soon as he entered his room, "that I have never been dazzled by the splendor of the throne, to which my birth destined me; I viewed it only in the light of the formidable duties which would devolve upon me in connection with it, and of the perils which encompass it. I could wish that my soul were more deserving, but I trust in the divine compassion."

Then the good prince turned to his sisters and his wife. "I cannot tell you," he cried, "how glad I am to be the

first to go; I shall be very sorry to leave you behind, but I shall be very glad not to be doomed to remain after you."

On the next day, the 13th of November, the archbishop of Reims came to administer the sacrament. Louis XV. knelt by the door, while the Duc d'Orléans and the Prince de Condé drew near the bed to hold the communion cloth. After mass was at an end the dauphin said: "God has vouchsafed me at this moment such comfort and solace as I have never known before."

The queen spoke about the possibility of recovery, and he cried quickly: "Ah, maman, keep that for yourself! for my own part, I do not desire it in the least."

The prince, who had said one day, as he stood gazing at Paris from the crown of the terrace at Bellevue, "I am thinking of the joy a monarch ought to feel in laboring for the happiness of so many men,"—this exemplary prince was torn from the affectionate hearts of the people, who held in honor his virtues and his sincere piety, on the 20th of December, 1765.

Nine days after, the dauphine wrote to her brother, Prince Xavier de Saxe: "A just God has willed that I should survive him for whom I would have given a thousand lives; I hope that He will grant me the boon of employing the rest of my pilgrimage here in preparing myself, by heart-felt penitence, to join his soul in heaven, where, I doubt not, he is offering up the same petition for me."

Marie Leczinska wept bitter tears for her son, who had always been so gentle and affectionate and so respectful

to her. But the pious queen was doomed to undergo fresh trials. She lavished upon her aged father the most touching devotion, and her mind was as full of him at a distance as if he had been by her side. She sent him at Nancy a warm wadded coat at the beginning of the winter. It took fire while Stanislas was sleeping in his easy-chair. He sought to reassure his daughter by writing to her, jokingly, "I am comforted, my child, by the thought that I am burning instead of you." That letter was the last that Marie Leczinska was to receive from a father whom she dearly loved. Stanislas breathed his last on the 24th of February, 1766.

At his death, in accordance with recent treaties, the two duchies of Lorraine and Bar were definitively reunited to France. It was, as Madame d'Armaillé says, Queen Marie's last gift to her adopted country.

Occasions of mourning succeeded one another with depressing rapidity. Marie-Josèphe de Saxe died fifteen months after her husband, on the 12th of March, 1767, commending her family to Marie Leczinska, who mourned for her as sincerely as if she had been her own daughter.

The queen bowed beneath the stern decrees of Providence. Her soul retained its strength, but her bodily force was shattered by sorrow. "Give me back my children," she would say, "and you will restore my health."

XVII.

DEATH OF MARIE LECZINSKA.

AT the close of their last interview, in the port of Ostia, on a beautiful star-lit night, as they stood gazing at the limpid waves, Sister Monica, giving utterance to her aspiration for "that life everlasting which eye has not seen nor ear heard, and to which the heart of man has not attained," said to her son: "My child, there is no longer any tie which binds me to the earth. What is there for me to do? Why am I still here? In my lifetime I have seen my every hope gratified. There was one thing and one alone, for which I wished to live a little longer,— it was to see you a Christian before I died. That pleasure God has given me to the full, since I see that you despise every earthly joy for the felicity of doing his work. Why should I remain longer here?"

What Saint-Monica said in the harbor of Ostia, Marie Leczinska might well have said in the palace of Versailles. She had imbued her children with Christian sentiments. Two of her daughters and her son had died in the peace of the Lord. The four daughters who were left her thought and lived like saints. Her task on earth was accomplished, and her thoughts were turned upon death.

The Carmelite Convent at Compiègne had become her favorite retreat. It was there that, fleeing from the pomp and grandeur which had never dazzled her vision, she debased and humbled herself before the King of kings, who gives strength and comfort.

This queen to whom her son said one day: "Do you know, maman, that you will surely end by having a quarrel with Sainte-Thérèse? Why do you want to be more fervent in your devotion than the most fervent Carmelites, and make your prayers longer than theirs?" — this queen, who would freely have exchanged her royal mantle for a robe of sackcloth, had for her oratory a little cell which was in no respect larger or better than those of the nuns. She wished, she said, to teach the world and herself how to die.

Madame Campan, who was so well acquainted with the four younger daughters of Louis XV., expresses herself in these words as to the beneficent influence of the queen upon their lives: "Mesdames had in their august mother, Marie Leczinska, the noblest example of all the religious and social virtues; by her eminent talents and her modest dignity, that princess threw a cloak over the evil deeds which were, and with too much justice, laid at the king's door; and so long as she lived she maintained at the court of Louis XV. that dignified and imposing attitude which alone retains the respect due to power. The princesses, her daughters, were worthy of their mother; and although some vile wretches have tried to aim the shafts of calumny, they have missed their mark entirely, turned aside by the

justly exalted opinion which people had of their lofty sentiments and the chaste purity of their lives."

The woman who had succeeded in maintaining some show of decorum in a society rotten to its core, and had thus saved from destruction some vestiges of the prestige of royalty, was regarded with unmixed veneration. In that age, as in all others, one meets with patterns of honor and virtue, patriarchal and truly Christian lives, and households which were sanctuaries in themselves. We must not judge the eighteenth century by the court and a few salons. Honorable men were still numerous, especially in the provincial nobility, the bourgeoisie, and the common people. Notwithstanding the assaults of Voltaire, and the construction of that Tower of Babel called the "Encyclopédie," Christianity continued to be what it had been for so many centuries, — the soul of France. The attempts of the philosophers to create a moral code independent of religion failed wretchedly, and all honest minds saw that the doctrines of the Voltairean school would lead the nation into dire calamity.

Marie Leczinska's life was, so to say, the symbol of the virtuous, Christian element. The pious queen had upheld the sacred rights of the family in the face of shameless infidelity; and Louis XV., in spite of his disorderly courses, would never have dared, as Louis XIV. did, to legitimate his adulterous offspring and declare them eligible to the throne of France. The scandal was confined to the boudoir of the favorites, while in the queen's apartments was to be

seen the edifying spectacle of true domestic happiness and virtue.

Marie Leczinska was loved and respected in the same degree that Madame de Pompadour had been detested and despised. Her arrival was always made a holiday and her departure caused general regret. "Is n't it strange," she wrote, "that I cannot leave Compiègne without everybody's weeping? I sometimes ask myself what I have done for all these people, whom I do not know, to make them love me so. They anticipate my lightest wish."

She gave away all the money she had, so says the Maréchale de Mouchy, her maid of honor; and when it was all gone she sold her jewelry. In one particular year, when the high price of bread caused wide-spread misery, she pawned her diamonds, and wore paste. Her charity was like her good-nature, inexhaustible. She had all the virtues of a bourgeoise, the manners of a great lady, and the dignified bearing of a queen. Her resignation under her misfortunes inspired all hearts with sympathy and respectful pity. Public opinion did homage to her virtue; envy and slander held their peace before her; even the philosophers honored her.

In a period of decomposition, when all hearts and all minds were in confusion, she preserved three qualities which were rare at court, — honesty, tact, and common-sense. Her virtue had nothing of the gloomy or severe. Her gentle, winning piety recalled that of Saint François de Sales, the most lovable of all the saints. She had the gift of winning

affection by a word or a smile. As Madame d'Armaillé says, there was scarcely a drawing-room in France toward the close of the last century where you would not meet some old lady always ready to tell about her presentation at Versailles, and to wipe the tears from her eyes as she spoke of the pleasant things good Queen Marie said to her on that memorable occasion. Affable by nature and policy, indulgent by instinct and by her sense of right, Marie Leczinska was distinguished among all the ladies of the court by a quality which is at once a source of strength and of fascination, a quality sovereigns need even more than their subjects, — benevolence.

When she fell sick the sorrow was universal. Every Frenchman had the affection of a brother or a son for her. The people besieged the doors of the palace of Versailles for news. Sometimes it was communicated by Louis himself. In Paris and in the provinces the churches were crowded with people praying for the good queen. "See how dearly they love her!" exclaimed her deeply moved husband, who came too late to appreciate all his sins against her.

The supreme moment was at hand. Marie Leczinska's four daughters passed the last nights at their mother's pillow, with a devoted affection which made them like sisters of charity. When the death agony was beginning Louis kneeled by his wife's bed, and said to her, weeping bitterly: "Here are our daughters, whom I bring to you." The good Christian mother understood the meaning that

lay beneath the words, and raising her eyes heavenward, she gave her last blessing to her children.

It is an hour of pain and anguish, a grievous hour, heart-rending above all others, when one loses a dear mother. One's grief is stupefying, and it seems as if one were the victim of a fearful dream. One cannot get accustomed to the horrible thought. Those blessed, venerable hands will never more be stretched above your head in loving benediction! Those lips whence came such wise counsel, such affectionate words, are closed forever! That warm and tender heart is cold now, and beats no more. You call your mother's name once more, — you call her, and for the first time, alas! she answers not. Then all that she has done for you, in your childhood, your youth, your whole life, comes back to you. Long years of devotion, self-sacrifice, and tender affection are concentrated in the space of one short moment. The heart, engulfed by memories as by a rising sea, gives way, and you find relief in sobs of agony. Oh! wretched he, who at that fatal moment believes that everything ends with this earthly life. Wretched he who has not the conviction that the dear departed is in heaven, and is watching over her children; that they can still love her and implore her blessing; that she will always be their strength and comforter, their good angel! Happy, on the other hand, amid their tears, happy under the most cruel trials, are those Christian souls who recall the prayer of Saint Louis, weeping for his mother, Blanche de Castille: "I give thee thanks, O my God! Thou hast loaned me a

good, an incomparable mother, but well I knew that she was not mine! Now, O Lord, thou hast taken her home to thy bosom. Thy Providence has so decreed. It is true that I loved her more than all the rest of the world; nevertheless, since thou hast so ordained, may thy adorable will be done! O my God! may thy holy name be blessed forever!"

Marie Leczinska died with the calm tranquillity of an angel. She was trying to tell her beads once more, when death interrupted upon earth the prayer which she would resume as a blessed saint in heaven. The beautiful words of Massillon were exemplified by the death of the virtuous queen:—

"The soul of the righteous man, during the days of his mortal life, does not dare to fix its gaze upon the source of God's judgments; it labors for its own salvation with fear and trembling; it shudders at the mere thought of that terrible future when even the righteous will hardly be saved, if they are judged without pity. But on the bed of death! Ah, then the God of peace shows his face, and soothes the trouble of the weary soul; its fears suddenly cease, and become a soothing hope; it looks with dying eyes through the cloud of mortality which still environs it, and catches a glimpse of that immortal country for which it had sighed so long, and where it had always dwelt in spirit."

Oh, ye who have seen a beloved mother die, ye who have in your heart regret and hope, remember!

It was on the 24th of June, 1768, that Marie Leczinska

breathed her last. The day before, she had entered upon her sixty-sixth year. Her reign had lasted forty-three years; and during that long period she had caused no tears to flow save those of joy or gratitude. Her women, her servants, and her poor dependents collected the smallest bits of her clothing as relics. Her mortal body, which lay in state for a week, was the object of veritable adoration on the part of the people.

The archbishop of Troyes pronounced the funeral oration. "Pontiff of the living God," he said, addressing the archbishop of Paris, "fear not to offer at her tomb incense which will perhaps some day be burned upon her altar."

Compare this life and this death to the life and death of the Marquise de Pompadour, if you wish to see the difference between virtue and vice.

Marie Leczinska was the last female sovereign who has ended her days upon the throne of France. The women who have worn the royal or imperial crown during the last century in our unhappy and fickle country have all been the innocent victims of revolution and of Fate's caprice. One died, august martyr, upon the scaffold; another at the moment of the invasion of the Allies, her heart broken by the miseries of her conquered country; a third passed out of sight and almost out of memory in the little duchy which was given her in exchange for the noblest empire in the world; a fourth died the death of a saint in a foreign land, perhaps regretting that she had ever been queen; and there is one other who, at this moment, is being unworthily

rewarded for her charity and courage, her virtue and her patriotism.

To-day, more fittingly than at any time, might a Bossuet say, contemplating Versailles deserted or the Tuileries in ruins: *Et nunc reges, intelligite! Erudimini, qui judicatis terram!* — "And now, ye monarchs, take heed! And be ye warned, ye who govern the earth!"

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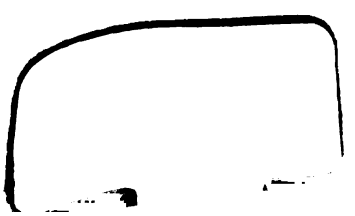
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